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News Releases

MAY 17, 2011 CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

Mexican national sentenced following alien smuggling accident that injured 17

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas - The last member a large alien smuggling organization, whose operation resulted in injury to 17 aliens following a single-vehicle accident, was sentenced on Tuesday to more than eight years in federal prison. The sentence was announced by U.S. Attorney José Angel Moreno, southern District of Texas. The investigation was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP).

Miguel Alvarado-Casas, 36, a national of Mexico illegally residing in Houston and convicted by a federal jury on March 3 for his part in a conspiracy to transport illegal aliens, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge John Rainey to 100 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release.

The charges against Alvarado-Casas and several other members of this smuggling organization stem from a Nov. 24, 2009 single-vehicle accident in Jim Wells County that injured 17 illegal aliens and the driver, Patricio Rebollar Jr., 29, of Houston. The pickup truck Rebollar was driving left the roadway and drove through a fence before going over a 40-foot embankment.

The 18 passengers were determined to be illegal aliens from Mexico and Guatemala. All were transported to area hospitals due to injuries sustained during the accident. Law enforcement officers were also able to identify a scout vehicle, normally used to divert law enforcement during illegal smuggling operations, traveling with the pickup truck.

The investigation by ICE HSI and USBP identified the following other members of the smuggling organization: Herman Valdez, 29, and Nuvia Nancy Martinez, 25, both of Houston, the driver and occupant of the "scout" car traveling with the truck involved in the accident, who were arrested the following day; Jorge Luis Gomez-Rosales, 24, a brush guide injured in the accident, and Juan Manuel Valdez-Fuentes, 26, both Mexican nationals, who were later charged for their involvement in the incident.

On May 5, 2010, ICE HSI agents and the Houston Police Department officers executed numerous search warrants and arrested several members of the alien smuggling organization, including Miguel Alvarado-Casas, who is the brother of the leader of the smuggling organization, Servando "El Chino" Alvarado-Casas. Several notebooks and ledgers related to alien trafficking were discovered in Miguel Alvarado-Casas' residence, and he is believed to have assisted his brother in the organization's financial recordkeeping.

During the search of several Houston-area residences, ICE HSI agents located \$75,000 in U.S. currency, multiple documents and several firearms, including a stolen assault rifle, all of which have been administratively forfeited to the United States.

The following were also arrested as a result of that enforcement action: Victor Manuel Campuzano, 23, and Jaime Roman Bustamante, 27, both of Houston, who served the organization as scout drivers; and "El Chino," 29, a Mexican national illegally residing in Houston. El Chino is identified as the leader of the alien smuggling organization, and is believed to be responsible for smuggling thousands of illegal aliens into the United States.

"El Chino" pleaded guilty in July 2010 to conspiracy to transport illegal aliens and was sentenced Oct. 19 to 15 years and 10 months imprisonment, and 10 years imprisonment for being a felon illegally possessing firearms. Both sentences will run concurrently.

Gomez-Rosales pleaded guilty in May 2010 to conspiracy to transport illegal aliens and was sentenced on Jan. 20 to 9 ½ years imprisonment. Campuzano was convicted by a federal jury on Dec. 3 of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens and was sentenced Feb. 24 by Judge John Rainey to eight years and four months imprisonment, to be followed by three years of supervised release.

Valdez pleaded guilty in July 2010 to conspiracy to transport illegal aliens, and was sentenced Feb. 24 to eight years and four months imprisonment, to be followed by three years of supervised release. Martinez pleaded guilty in August 2010 to conspiracy to transport illegal aliens, and was sentenced in February to seven years and three months imprisonment, to be followed by three years of supervised release.

Rebollar pleaded guilty in January 2010 to conspiracy to transport illegal aliens and is serving a four-year term of imprisonment. Valdez-Fuentes pleaded guilty in August 2010 to conspiracy to transport illegal aliens and will be sentenced in June by Judge John Rainey.

Miguel Alvarado-Casas has been in federal custody without bond since his arrest and will remain there pending transfer to a Bureau of Prisons facility to be designated in the near future where he will serve his sentence. Both Alvarado-Casas and "El Chino" will be deported to Mexico after they complete their prison sentences.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lance Watt, Southern District of Texas, prosecuted this case.

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