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Foreign National Pleads Guilty in Houston to Human Smuggling Charges

WASHINGTON – A foreign national pleaded guilty today to federal human smuggling charges for his role in a scheme to smuggle undocumented migrants from India into the United States, announced Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Criminal Division; U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson for the Southern District of Texas; and Special Agent in Charge Brian M. Moskowitz of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Houston

Fabiano Augusto Amorim, 28, a Brazilian national, pleaded guilty today at a hearing before U.S. District Judge Ewing Werlein Jr. in Houston, to one count of conspiracy to bring undocumented migrants into the United States for profit and to one count of unlawfully bringing two undocumented migrants into the United States for profit.

On June 6, 2012, Amorim was charged by indictment, along with four other individuals, with one count of conspiracy to smuggle undocumented migrants into the United States and six human smuggling counts related to five incidents in which Amorim helped smuggle undocumented migrants into the United States. Based on Amorim's guilty plea, the government will dismiss the remaining human smuggling counts against him at sentencing.

At the plea hearing and in related court documents, Amorim admitted that between January 2011 and April 2012, he conspired with his co-defendants to bring undocumented migrants to the United States, and to encourage and induce undocumented migrants to come to the United States unlawfully. According to court documents, Amorim and his co-conspirators devised the scheme to profit financially.

In support of the conspiracy, Amorim and other conspirators recruited individuals in India who were willing to pay up to \$60,000 to be smuggled into the United States. For their smuggling operations, Amorim and his co-conspirators used a network of alleged conspirators in South America, Central America, the Caribbean and the United States, including the state of Texas. Using this network, Amorim and his co-conspirators transported groups of undocumented migrants from locations within India through South America, Central America and the Caribbean and then into the United States by various means, including by air travel, automobiles, water craft and foot. Many of these smuggling events, including five of the incidents described in the indictment, involved illegal entry into the United States via the border between the United States and Mexico near McAllen and Laredo, Texas.

At sentencing, which is scheduled for April 5, 2013, Amorim faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000. Amorim currently is serving a 36-month sentence in federal prison for participating in a separate conspiracy to smuggle undocumented migrants from Brazil and Peru into the United States via a maritime route from the Bahamas into southern Florida.

Amorim's co-conspirator Maria Adela De Luna pleaded guilty on Nov. 9, 2012, to one count of conspiracy to harbor undocumented migrants in the United States. Co-conspirator Kaushik Jayantibhai Thakkar pleaded guilty on Dec. 3, 2012, to one count of conspiracy to bring undocumented migrants into the United

States for profit and to one count of unlawfully bringing two undocumented migrants into the United States for profit.

The investigation was conducted by agents with ICE-HSI in McAllen and Houston, with the assistance of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Alien Smuggling Interdiction Unit. This case is being prosecuted jointly by Trial Attorney Stephen Curran of the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Leo J. Leo III and Casey MacDonald of the Southern District of Texas.

The investigation was conducted under the Extraterritorial Criminal Travel Strike Force (ECT) program, a joint partnership between the Justice Department's Criminal Division and HSI. The ECT program focuses on human smuggling networks that may present particular national security or public safety risks, or present grave humanitarian concerns. ECT has dedicated investigative, intelligence and prosecutorial resources. ECT coordinates and receives assistance from other U.S. government agencies and foreign law enforcement authorities.

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Criminal Division