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News Releases



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2 foreign nationals residing in Houston sentenced to 3 years in federal prison for smuggling illegal aliens from India for profit

WASHINGTON – Two men from India and Brazil were each sentenced Friday to serve 36 months in federal prison for their roles in smuggling illegal aliens into the United States for private financial gain.

These sentences were announced by Acting Assistant Attorney General Mythili Raman of the Justice Department's Criminal Division; U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson, Southern District of Texas; and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director John Morton.

This investigation was conducted by special agents with ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in McAllen and Houston, with the assistance of U.S. Customs and Border Protection's Alien Smuggling Interdiction Unit.

Kaushik Jayantibhai Thakkar, 33, and Fabiano Augusto Amorim, 28, were sentenced to three years in prison by U.S. District Judge Ewing Werlein Jr. in the Southern District of Texas. In addition to their prison terms, Thakkar and Amorim were sentenced to serve two years of supervised release.

On Dec. 2, 2012, and Jan. 4, 2013, Thakkar and Amorim each respectively pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to bring illegal aliens into the United States for profit, and to one count of unlawfully bringing two illegal aliens into the United States for profit.

According to court documents, Thakkar and Amorim worked together and with other co-conspirators to smuggle and recruit individuals in India who were willing to pay up to \$60,000 to be smuggled into the United States.

For their smuggling operations, Thakkar, Amorim and their associates used a network of co-conspirators in South America, Central America, the Caribbean and the United States, including the state of Texas. Using this network, Thakkar, Amorim and their co-conspirators transported groups of illegal aliens from locations within India through South America, Central America and the Caribbean, and then into the U.S. by various means: air travel, automobiles, water craft and foot. Many of these smuggling events involved illegally entering the United States via the border with Mexico near McAllen and Laredo, Texas.

A third co-conspirator, Maria Adela De Luna, pleaded guilty Nov. 9, 2012 to one count of conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens in the United States. On Feb. 15, De Luna was sentenced to serve 19 months in prison and three years of supervised release for her role in the conspiracy.

This case is being prosecuted jointly by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Leo J. Leo III and Casey MacDonald, Southern District of Texas, and Trial Attorney Stephen Curran of the Criminal Division's Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section.

This 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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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

ICE is a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities. For more information, visit www.ICE.gov. To report suspicious activity, call 1-866-347-2423 or complete our [tip form](http://www.ice.gov/tips/) (<http://www.ice.gov/tips/>).