



News Releases

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PHOENIX, AZ

2 alien smugglers sentenced to a 17-year combined sentence

PHOENIX — Two Mexican nationals were sentenced Monday to 10 and seven years in jail respectively for harboring illegal aliens for profit and aiding and abetting and transporting illegal aliens for profit, following an investigation by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) offices in Washington, D.C., and Phoenix.

Guadalupe Toribio-Caballero, 25, and Humberto Guzman Caballero, 32, were leaders and managers of a local Phoenix smuggling operation, which specialized in harboring and transporting illegal immigrants from Central and South America, including Brazil, and had been involved in smuggling thousands of people since at least 2008.

According to court documents, on May 10, 2010, the ICE HSI office in Washington D.C., received a phone call from the El Salvadorian Embassy regarding three juvenile aliens, ages 11, 13 and 15, who were being held hostage in Phoenix. The parents of the juveniles, who were living in the D.C.-area, had already paid \$19,500 to the human smugglers. The smugglers were extorting an additional \$7,500 for the safe release of the children. ICE HSI special agents in Washington, D.C., working with ICE HSI agents in Phoenix, tracked the cell phone numbers used by the smugglers to several addresses in Phoenix.

On May 11, 2010, ICE HSI agents in Phoenix rescued the three juvenile aliens, and with the help of the Phoenix Police Department, discovered 16 other victim hostages at a Phoenix "drop-house," including a 10-year-old female from Brazil. The hostages were from Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, El Salvador, and Brazil. They told law enforcement that they had been smuggled into the United States, and were being held against their will in the house until their families paid their smuggling fees.

The other victims, including the juveniles, were held hostage at a "drop-house" where the defendants threatened the victims, menaced and physically intimidated them, and

kept them in a locked house in order to compel their family members to pay the smuggling fee.

On May 20, 2010, a federal grand jury in Phoenix returned a three count indictment against the defendants, charging them with violations of conspiracy to commit hostage taking, hostage taking, and harboring illegal aliens for profit. On Dec. 29, 2010, the federal grand jury added an additional count of transporting illegal aliens for profit.

The investigation was conducted by ICE HSI offices in Phoenix, Washington D.C./Virginia, with assistance from ICE HSI offices in Boston and New York City. The prosecution was handled by Walter Perkel and Howard Sukenic, assistant U.S. attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.