

July 19, 2012
Laredo, TX

2 more convicted for attempting to smuggle 652 assault rifle magazines to Mexico

LAREDO, Texas – Two Mexican nationals pleaded guilty Thursday to attempting to illegally smuggle 652 assault rifle magazines into Mexico, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson, Southern District of Texas. The investigation for this case is being led by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

Julio Cesar Flores-Martinez, 46, and Francisco Padilla-Perez, 41, both Mexican nationals, pleaded guilty July 19 before U.S. District Judge Diana Saldana.

According to court documents, on April 19, HSI obtained information that a person, believed to be a Mexican firearms buyer, was trying to obtain high-capacity AK-47 rifle magazines from the United States. Undercover special agents posed as firearm magazine suppliers and contacted the buyer, later identified as Padilla-Perez, who requested 650 high-capacity AK-47 rifle magazines. Padilla-Perez told the special agents he would pay \$19,500 cash for the rifle magazines. He then instructed special agents to deliver the magazines to a Mexican truck driver from Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, who would attempt to smuggle them into Mexico via one of the international bridges in Laredo, Texas. Flores-Martinez was the truck driver.

Padilla-Perez and the undercover special agents met with Flores-Martinez. Flores-Martinez received nine black suitcases containing 652 high capacity AK-47 rifle magazines and hid them in the cab of his truck while Padilla-Perez observed from nearby. After Flores-Martinez finished loading, Padilla-Perez then handed the special agents a white plastic bag containing \$19,500 in cash.

Flores-Martinez drove to the World Trade Bridge where U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers recovered the 652 high-capacity rifle magazines. The magazines are made for 7.62x39mm ammunition and designed for use with AK-47-type assault rifles. Each magazine is designed to hold 30 rounds of the rifle ammunition.

Flores-Martinez and Padilla-Perez have been in custody since their arrest, where they will remain pending sentencing at a date to be determined in the near future. They each face sentences up to 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

HSI is being assisted with the investigation by the following agencies: the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; CBP; the U.S. State Department; Webb County Sheriff's Office; and the Laredo Police Department.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Homero Ramirez, Southern District of Texas is prosecuting this case.

<http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/1207/120719laredo.htm>