



News Releases

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CORPUS CHRISTI, TX

31 charged as part of decade-long human smuggling organization

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas — A federal grand jury returned indictments against 31 Texas residents for their involvement in a conspiracy to harbor and transport illegal aliens. The indictments were announced by U.S. Attorney Kenneth Magidson, Southern District of Texas, and Robert Rutt, special agent in charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Houston.

A sealed indictment was returned Jan. 25, and partially unsealed upon the arrests of the following 12 individuals: Petronilo Sanchez-Jimenez, 42, Norma Leticia Silva-Garcia, aka Norma Sanchez, aka Norma Rocha, 38, and Sandro Alvarez-Maldonado, 35, all of Edinburg, Texas; Armando Olmedo-Trevino, 47, Maria Herrera, 34, John Castillo, 31, Ricky Garibaldi, 46, Oscar Garza-Perales, 28, all of Wharton, Texas; Donna Simkins, 45, Tracy Howard, 47, Christian Russo, 39, all of Houston; and Cristobal Ochoa, 48, of Falfurrias, Texas.

On Feb. 22, the indictment was superceded and unsealed upon the arrest of the following additional 19 defendants: Rosalinda Carbajal, 49, of Wharton; Alberto Ramon Castellano, 37, Veronica Rodriguez-Salinas, 27, Andrew Joseph Rodriguez, 21, all of Falfurrias, Texas; Jeenifer Ledesma, 21, Veronica Gallegos, 32, Alejandro Martinez, 30, Darrell Chatmon, 21, Marixsa Sermeno, 29, Mayra Patino, 24, Priscilla Arispe, 22, Miriam Suarez, 20, all of Houston, Texas; Krystal Montana, 24, of Conroe, Texas; Mary Jane Hane, 59, Tina Beridon, 41, both of Huffman, Texas; Heather Redmond, 20, of Sugarland, Texas; Angie Enriquez aka Angie Luevano, 29, of Texas City, Texas; Chastinique Kemp, 21, of Missouri City, Texas; and Ashli Urbina, 23, of Galveston, Texas.

The indictment remains sealed regarding individuals charged, but not yet in custody.

The indictment alleges the defendants engaged in a conspiracy to harbor illegal aliens in buildings and other places and to transport illegal aliens by means of a motor vehicle from Aug. 9, 2002 to Jan. 31, 2012. The following five defendants have already entered guilty pleas for the conspiracy and will be sentenced on May 3: Herrera, Silva-Garcia, Sanchez-Jimenez, Simkins and Garibaldi. A notice of forfeiture has been entered for about \$83,000, along with two residences, which have been seized as part of the overall investigation.

This case is being tried in Corpus Christi before Senior U.S. District Judge Janis Graham Jack. The conspiracy charge carries up to 10 years in prison and up to a \$250,000 fine upon conviction. Garza-Perales, a citizen of Mexico, was separately indicted for illegally re-entering

the United States after having been previously deported. If convicted of that offense, he faces an additional prison term of up to 20 years, a maximum \$250,000 fine and removal from the United States after he completes his sentence.

The indictment and arrests are the result of an on-going investigation by HSI in cooperation with the U.S. Attorney's Office. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Chad W. Cowan and Jeffrey D. Preston, Southern District of Texas, are prosecuting this case.

An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. A defendant is presumed innocent unless convicted through due process of law.