

## 7 alleged human smuggling network members arrested in Guatemala

GUATEMALA CITY, Guatemala – Seven alleged members of a suspected human smuggling criminal network were arrested Wednesday in Quetzaltenango by Guatemalan law enforcement officials with the assistance of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection, under the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

This network has been linked with multiple human smuggling organizations working along the U.S. and Mexican borders, including Texas and Arizona.

The individuals arrested in Quetzaltenango were: Antonio Rolando Chavez Paxtor, Maricela Isabel Gonzalez Hernandez, Eliseo Alvarado Gonzalez, Marciano Alvarado Gonzalez, Antonio Adonias Gonzalez Hernandez, Genaro Elias Jimenez and Pablo Arnoldo Gomez-Gonzalez. Two other members of this organization were arrested in Mexican territory: Douglas Ivan Aguilar-Juarez and Milton Rocael Sebastian Cardona.

These nine individuals are believed to be key members of a confederation of Central American human smuggling organizations that recruit, organize and transport people, including unaccompanied children, from their points of origin in Central and South America to the United States via Arizona and South Texas. This organization has been directly linked with operations where Guatemalans trying to migrate north died during their journey.

During the investigation, multiple bank accounts used by members of this organization were identified. Account movements add up to over \$3 million U.S. dollars.

The operation leading to the arrests in Guatemala was developed jointly by Guatemala's Ministerio Publico and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as a result of an initiative that increased information sharing amongst law enforcement agencies.

Through close coordination with prosecutors from the Guatemala Ministerio Publico HSI Guatemala Country Attaché Office is targeting these smuggling networks using Guatemalan human smuggling and money laundering statutes.

In addition to arrests, under Guatemalan law, the HSI Guatemala Country Attaché Office is able to facilitate the seizure of assets and finances, including Guatemalan bank accounts, by the government of Guatemala - effectively neutralizing the smuggler at the point of origin in Central America.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security recently announced an [ongoing surge operation in the United States](#) to target and dismantle human smuggling operations. Less than one month into this three-month operation, U.S. officials announced that HSI had arrested 191 smugglers and their associates on criminal charges in the United States. U.S. officials also took more than 450

undocumented people into custody and seized nearly \$600,000 U.S. dollars in illicit profits from U.S. bank accounts held by human smuggling and drug trafficking organizations.

Human smugglers have no regard for the value of a human life and view the people they smuggle as an expendable business commodity. Smugglers may separate women from their children as another means of extorting more money and in severe cases, hold their human cargo hostage and demand more money from family members as a means to extort higher fees.

Human smugglers often transport their human cargo — men, women and children — through desolate terrain, without food or water, or in trucks or trailers without any ventilation. They also arrange for their human cargo to be taken to drop-houses under deplorable conditions with no way to communicate with relatives or to notify authorities if there is an emergency. Some smuggled aliens have been beaten or raped.

The public is encouraged to report suspected human smuggling by calling the ICE tip line toll-free at 1-866-DHS-2ICE.

For more information, visit [www.ice.gov/human-smuggling/](http://www.ice.gov/human-smuggling/).

<http://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSICE/bulletins/c8b8fe>