



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

June 14, 2011
Newark, NJ

6 charged in New Jersey with international alien smuggling conspiracy *Hundreds of aliens from Brazil and India smuggled into the U.S. via Mexico and Caribbean*

NEWARK, N.J. – Six alleged members of an international alien smuggling scheme were charged in federal court Tuesday with smuggling hundreds of aliens from Brazil, India and elsewhere into the United States following an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI).

The following six individuals were charged in the complaint: Nacip Teotonio Pires, aka "Ze Maria," aka "Baraso," 47, of Newark; Rubens Da Silva, aka "Diogo Oliveira," 39, of Haverhill, Mass.; Sanderlei Alves DaCruz, aka "Kauan," aka "Beicinho," 32, of Houston, Texas; Francismar Da Conceicao, aka "Alex," 36, of Hillside, N.J.; Claudinei Pereira Mota, 34, of Newark; and one unnamed individual Priscilla LNU, aka "Clema Aparacida Lopes," of Long Branch, N.J. Each defendant is charged with one count of conspiracy to bring aliens into the U.S. illegally.

Pires and Da Conceicao were arrested in Newark on June 10; Da Silva and DaCruz were arrested the same day in Haverhill and Houston, respectively. All four were arrested for administrative immigration violations as part of a coordinated effort to prevent their flight from prosecution. Mota was arrested in Newark for similar immigration violations on June 13. The sixth defendant remains at large.

"This investigation has shown the callous disregard for human life exhibited by people taking advantage of others for profit," said Peter T. Edge, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Newark. "Those who engage in such acts will be held accountable."

According to court documents, from January 2008 through June 2011, the defendants conspired with each other and others to bring aliens into the U.S. illegally as part of an elaborate for-profit smuggling scheme that involved co-conspirators in New Jersey, Massachusetts, Texas and elsewhere. As a part of the scheme, the defendants arranged, facilitated and monitored the travel of customers along two primary smuggling routes – the first of which included travel through Central America and across the international border between Mexico and the U.S. The second route included travel through St. Maarten, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

ICE HSI agents intercepted the co-conspirators' cell phone calls, and used confidential sources of information and other means to make the arrests. Agents learned that the defendants charged their smuggled customers from \$13,000 to more than \$25,000, depending on the route the customer used and whether the customer paid in advance or in installments after arriving in the United States.

Many of the customers of the alien smuggling scheme were young women from Brazil, most of whom agreed to repay part of their smuggling debt after arriving in the U.S. by working as dancers in strip clubs in Newark and elsewhere. Some women who fell behind on their debt repayment were urged to consider engaging in prostitution to earn extra money.

The defendants induced customers to pay by threatening to harm family members, and by obtaining the title to property the customers owned in their home countries. The defendants also instructed customers who were caught crossing the border illegally to concoct false asylum claims and falsely report that they would be abused or face other danger if immediately deported.

Assistant U.S. Attorney André M. Espinosa of the U.S. Attorney's Office Economic Crimes Unit in Newark is prosecuting this case. Each defendant faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.