

May 9, 2012

Indianapolis, IN

## Multi-state prostitution ring based in Indianapolis dismantled

*Three brothers ran complex ring that transported dozens of women on weekly basis*

INDIANAPOLIS – An interstate prostitution ring based in Indianapolis that was operated by three brothers – all illegal aliens – has been dismantled and the brothers sentenced, announced Joseph H. Hogsett, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana.

This prosecution was the result of an extensive investigation by multiple law enforcement agencies, including: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); FBI; the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department; the Marion County Sheriff's Department; and the Addison (Ill.) Police Department.

Gregorio Hernandez-Castilla, 34, of Indianapolis, was sentenced May 9 by U.S. District Judge William T. Lawrence to 41 months in prison after pleading guilty to conspiring to operate an interstate prostitution ring with his two brothers.

This follows the sentencing of both Jose Luis Hernandez-Castilla, of Indianapolis, and Norberto Hernandez-Castilla, of Chicago, to 51 months in prison each on similar charges. All three men were illegally residing in the United States.

"For years, this criminal organization moved women like human merchandise all over this city and across the Midwest," Hogsett said. "I am proud to announce today that we have finalized our effort to completely dismantle this dangerous group, bringing an end to their cycle of exploitation."

According to Assistant U.S. Attorneys Gayle L. Helart and Bradley P. Shepard, who prosecuted the case for the government, Judge Lawrence found in sentencing the Hernandez-Castilla brothers that all three had used force and the threat of force against women involved in their criminal operation in an effort to coerce their continued cooperation.

"Our office has made it a priority to aggressively prosecute individuals who capitalize on the misfortune of others," Hogsett said. "Through the groundbreaking work of our front-line federal prosecutors, we will continue to pursue and hold accountable those found guilty of such heinous crimes."

The Hernandez-Castilla criminal organization was headed by the three brothers and had been operating for a number of years in the Indianapolis area, largely under the direction of Jose Luis Hernandez-Castilla. The brothers would acquire women to act as prostitutes, on many occasions smuggling them into the United States from Mexico and Central America. Once here, many were

often without a means by which to make money, and thus would engage in prostitution so as to pay off debts they owed the brothers for subsidizing their entry into the country.

In addition, the brothers directed another group of individuals who acted as local managers, running prostitution operations out of apartments and houses located throughout Indianapolis and in surrounding states, including Michigan, Illinois and Ohio. The women engaged in prostitution were rarely allowed to stay in any one location for more than a week, and the operation employed numerous drivers who would transport the women from one site to another on a regular basis.

The organization itself operated almost exclusively within the Hispanic community, advertising its services through the distribution of business cards bearing advertisements and telephone numbers for auto repair or western wear outfitters. These business cards were known within the Hispanic community as contact numbers for arranging appointments with prostitutes.

Each appointment, referred to as a "ticket," cost between \$40 and \$50.

In addition to the Hernandez-Castilla brothers, twelve other named defendants are facing charges for their roles in the operation. They include the following individuals, all of whom are illegal aliens and were Indianapolis residents, unless otherwise indicated:

- Elvin Herrera
- Hector Elizalde-Hernandez
- Javier Aguilera-Sanchez (Mich.)
- Fredy Arnulfo Valle-Soto
- Jose Mejia
- Reynel Lagos-Martinez (Ohio)
- Dominga Polanco
- Israel Ortiz
- Jorge Armando Rodriguez-Sanchez
- Julio Aguilar-Rodriguez \*
- Fortino Ramirez-Fernandez \*
- Santos Nunez \*

\*Note: Julio Aguilar-Rodriguez has a change-of-plea and sentencing hearing scheduled for May 30, 2012. Fortino Ramirez-Fernandez and Santos Nunez remain fugitives at this time.

A defendant is presumed innocent and is entitled to a fair trial at which the government must prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.