

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California

***United States Attorney
Karen P. Hewitt***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - October 12, 2007

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Jose Olivas, Jr., a former Border Patrol agent, pled guilty today in federal court in San Diego before United States District Court Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz to conspiracy to transport hundreds of undocumented aliens.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Ott, who is prosecuting the case, in connection with his guilty pleas, Olivas admitted that he functioned as a “scout” for the smuggling organization by driving his personal vehicle a few minutes ahead of the co-conspirators’ vehicles when they were transporting illegal aliens. Olivas also admitted that he would routinely call the driver of the transport vehicle to advise him of the operational status of the San Clemente Border Patrol checkpoint, in order to ensure successful transport and passage of the aliens through the checkpoint. To further the conspiracy, Olvias admitted that he showed reports and data compiled by Border Patrol to other members of the conspiracy. Olvias further admitted that in exchange for his participation in the smuggling conspiracy, he accepted cash for each of the scouting missions. Olivas also pleaded guilty to laundering money for the smuggling organization, which conduct included personally purchasing alien transport vehicles with smuggling funds.

United States Attorney Hewitt said, “Corrupt law enforcement agents who conspire with smugglers taint the good work and fine reputation of their colleagues who work hard to enforce our immigration laws.”

“I commend the men and women of the San Diego Sector for their dedicated service and vigilance, while securing our nation’s border. The San Diego Sector is committed to preserving the honor and integrity of the U.S. Border Patrol. In doing so, we sometimes have the unfortunate task of identifying those who have acted contrary to these traditions. Although this is one of those times, our focus remains on the mission of securing the border and protecting our nation,” said Deputy Chief Patrol Agent Richard Barlow.

United States Attorney Hewitt praised the efforts of the Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General, the Internal Revenue Service and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement for their investigation of the case.

Richard L. Skinner, Inspector General of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Office of Inspector General (OIG) said, “The US Border Patrol is comprised of dedicated men and women who serve as America's first line of defense in securing our international borders. The conduct of Mr. Olivas is serious and disturbing and potentially compromised the security of our borders. We remain committed to working with our law enforcement partners to aggressively investigate all allegations of corruption to protect our borders and the integrity of DHS personnel, programs, and operations.”

“This investigation highlights a reality that criminal smuggling organizations are always on the lookout for any perceived weakness they can use to ensure their profits,” said Miguel Unzueta, Special Agent in Charge for ICE investigations in San Diego. “ICE agents will continue our aggressive pursuit of smuggling organizations, especially when we uncover corrupt officials working for them.”

“When individuals corrupt our border for their own personal financial gain at the expense of our country’s safety, IRS special agents will be ready to utilize their financial expertise to follow the trail of laundered funds,” said Thomas Jankowski, Acting Special Agent in Charge, Los Angeles Field Office. “IRS Criminal Investigation will continue to be part of a joint federal law enforcement team that ensures corruption at our border and money laundering activities will not be tolerated.”

Sentencing is scheduled for January 16, 2008, at 9:00 a.m., before United States District Judge Barry T. Moskowitz. Co- defendants James Fierro-Herrera and Rafael Hernandez Lozano have each pled guilty and are awaiting sentencing. Another defendant, Maria Del Pilar Fierro-Herrera, remains at large.

DEFENDANTS

Case Number: 07cr0163-BTM

Jose Olivas, Jr.	Sentencing Date: January 16, 2008
James Fierro-Herrera	Sentencing Date: November 2, 2007
Rafael Hernandez Lozano	Sentencing Date: November 16, 2007
Maria Del Pilar Fierro-Herrera	Fugitive

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 18, United States Code, Section 371 - Conspiracy to Bring in Illegal Aliens
Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) - Bringing in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain
Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) - Transporting Illegal Aliens
Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956(h) - Conspiracy to Launder Money
Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956(a)(1)(B)(i) - Money Laundering

AGENCIES

Department of Homeland Security, Office of the Inspector General
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation