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TRANSPORTER OF ILLEGAL ALIENS SENTENCED

Tampa, Florida - U.S. District Judge Steven D. Merryday, today sentenced Basilio Leocadio Gonzalez-Lopez, age 31, and a citizen of Mexico, to 46 months' imprisonment for conspiring to transport 25 or more illegal aliens within the United States. This is one of more than 65 cases prosecuted by the United States Attorney's Office, Tampa Division, involving the transportation of illegal aliens, since the United States Border Patrol began to investigate such interstate conduct in the Tampa Division in May of 2004.

Gonzalez-Lopez pled guilty to the conspiracy charge on December 4, 2007.

According to court documents, agents of the United States Border Patrol (BP) responded to a Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) request for assistance on Interstate 75 southbound in Hillsborough County, Florida, on April 16, 2007. An FHP Trooper had stopped a 1998 Ford F-150 truck with a camper shell for traffic violations and discovered it contained 14 occupants which he suspected were illegal aliens. The BP agents ascertained that all fourteen individuals were illegally in the U.S. The vehicle was owned and registered to the defendant, Basilio Leocadio Gonzalez-Lopez.

On August 7, 2007, BP agents interdicted an alien smuggling load of illegal aliens in a white 1998 Ford Clubwagon which was traveling southbound on Interstate Highway 75 in Hernando County. The BP agents found seven illegal aliens in the vehicle including

the defendant, Gonzalez-Lopez, a four-time deportee.

According to court documents, the defendant admitted to being a citizen of Mexico and having entered the United States illegally and without permission. He also admitted, when questioned about the April 16, 2007 stop of his vehicle in Hillsborough County, that the driver of his vehicle was working for him, that he had sent the driver to Georgia to pick up a load of illegal aliens to bring to Florida, and that he was going to pay the driver \$100 for the job. He also stated that he had been transporting illegal aliens from Georgia to Florida for several months. He stated that he charged each alien for transporting them and that they would pay off the dept by working for his (the defendant's) wife who was a labor contractor.

The case was investigated by the United States Border Patrol and the Florida Highway Patrol. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Donald L. Hansen.