



Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Texas

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**CBP OFFICER ARRESTED FOR ACCEPTING BRIBES FOR TRAVEL
PERMITS**

(LAREDO, Texas)– A Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer has been arrested and charged for accepting bribes for fraudulently making and delivering an official travel document, United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced today.

Ramiro Villarreal Jr., 27, a Customs and Border Protection Officer, was arrested May 1, 2008, and accused of accepting bribes to fraudulently make I-94s. A criminal complaint was filed in federal court this morning. Villarreal appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Diana Saldaña and has been ordered released upon posting a \$100,000 cash or surety bond. The court has scheduled a preliminary hearing for May 15, 2008.

The criminal complaint alleges that on April 30, 2008, a Mexican national leaving the United States was found in possession of a fraudulently made Department of Homeland Security CBP I-94 Arrival-Departure Record form, a permit which evidences an authorized stay in the United States, bearing CBP officer Villarreal's stamp. Further investigation lead to the arrest of Villarreal on Thursday, May 1, 2008, for having allegedly solicited and demanded a bribe for the permit. I-94 permits are utilized by foreign nationals in conjunction with an entry document, such as a passport or a B1/B2 visa (commonly known as border crossing cards or laser visas), to travel beyond the border area into the interior of the United States. An applicant for an I-94 permit applies in person and presents his/her passport or a border crossing card at a Port of Entry. A CBP officer then reviews the travel permit application and takes photographs and fingerprints of the applicant. If granted the permit, the CBP officer will issue the authorized permit under the officer's stamp.

On April 30, 2008, Villarreal was on duty as a CBP officer at the International Port of Entry No. 2, Lincoln-Juarez Bridge, in Laredo, Texas. The complaint alleges Villarreal fraudulently made and delivered the I-94 permit to the Mexican citizen, without the foreign national presenting the requisite passport or crossing card or being inspected, in exchange for a bribe. At the time of his arrest on May 1, 2008, the complaint alleges Villarreal was found to be in possession of two additional fraudulently made I-94 permits.

The investigation leading to the charges was conducted by Special Agents of the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security - Office of the Inspector General, with the assistance of U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Assistant United States Attorney Diana Song is prosecuting the case.