



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

**Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FIVE IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT AGENTS ARRESTED ON ALIEN SMUGGLING CHARGES**

**U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton** announced today that a federal grand jury in El Paso, Texas, returned a six-count indictment charging five Immigration Enforcement Agents with immigration related offenses. Those indicted include: **Mario Fernandez, Bobby Torres, Horacio Ventura, Joselino Ruiz and Sylvia Licon**. Mario Fernandez was arrested today in San Antonio, the other defendants were arrested yesterday in El Paso where they had their initial appearance and posted bond of \$10,000 each.

According to the indictment, beginning on September 2, 2003 and continuing through September 22, 2003, the detention officers engaged in a conspiracy to transport and shield from detection a female alien. It further charges Fernandez and Torres with encouraging and inducing the alien to enter the United States and charges defendants Fernandez and Licon with transporting the alien from the location where she was staying to another location. Defendants Ventura and Ruiz were charged with Misprision of a Felony for having knowledge of the felony committed by their colleagues and failing to report the illegal activity.

“Law enforcement officers are called upon every day to risk their safety to protect individuals and we are grateful for their service. Unfortunately, on occasion some officers overstep the bounds of the law and when they do, we are compelled to prosecute them as we would any other individual. The indictment of these government officials reaffirms the commitment of the United States Attorneys Office to vigorously investigate and prosecute public officials who abuse the public trust and violate the law,” stated **U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton**.

“The Detention and Removal program will not tolerate criminal wrongdoing among its ranks,” stated **Robert E. Jolicoeur, Interim El Paso Detention and Removal Field Office Director**. “The Detention and Removal leadership was quick to investigate the allegations as soon as they came to our attention and acted expeditiously to take the proper corrective measures.”

This case is being investigated by the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General. Assistant United States Attorney Brandy Gardes is prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

**An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.**

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