



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

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BP AGENT ARRESTED IN SMUGGLING CONSPIRACY

(MCALLEN, Texas) – A United States Border Patrol (BP) agent has been arrested along with two others for conspiracy to distribute cocaine, United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced today.

BP agent Reynaldo Zuniga, 34, of Harlingen, Texas, was arrested for conspiring to distribute cocaine in the United States with two civilian co-conspirators, Luis Alfredo Cruz, 29, and Jose Luis Arteaga, 24, both of Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico. The illegal smuggling venture crossing the Rio Grande River west of the Hidalgo, Texas, Port of Entry was revealed upon surveillance by law enforcement of the three alleged suspects, June 6, 2008.

After the arrest, Arteaga provided a statement outlining the smuggling scheme. Arteaga stated that a friend, "Ramon," requested he smuggle a backpack containing cocaine across the Rio Grande for an agreed fee of \$2000 in cash. He met a BP agent named "Rey" along the banks of the Rio Grande, who drove him to a Whataburger in Hidalgo, Texas. Arteaga then contacted Cruz, who was to receive \$400 to drive him to Pharr, Texas. Arteaga stated that "Rey" assisted him on at least six prior occasions in the smuggling of narcotics and aliens.

Zuniga revealed that he received \$1,200, found in his shirt pocket, to transport an illegal alien from the Rio Grande River to Hidalgo, Texas, while Cruz admitted he received \$400 to transport Arteaga to Pharr. Cruz said he suspected the backpack contained drugs, though he did not know for sure.

Agents recovered 11 bricks of suspected cocaine of which at least one kilogram tested positive for cocaine. The punishment range for conspiracy to possess more than five kilograms of cocaine is a minimum of 10 years and a maximum of life in prison, with a fine of up to \$4 million.

The defendants made initial appearances before United States Magistrate Judge Peter Ormsby June 9, 2008, at which time the United States moved for detention. The detention hearings are scheduled for Thursday, June 12, 2008, at 9:00 a.m.

The prosecution is the result of a continuing investigation conducted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), ICE Office of Professional Responsibility and the Department of Homeland Security - Office of Inspector General with the full cooperation of the United States Border Patrol.

A criminal complaint is an accusation of criminal conduct. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.

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