



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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VIOLENT HOSTAGE TAKER RECEIVES LIFE SENTENCE

PHOENIX— Bernardo Mancinas-Flores, 29 of Escuinapa, Sinaloa, Mexico, was sentenced here late yesterday by U.S. District Judge Roslyn O. Silver to life in prison plus seven years. Mancinas-Flores was found guilty by a federal jury on August 29, 2007, of Conspiracy to Take Hostages, Hostage Taking, Conspiracy to Harbor Illegal Aliens, Harboring Illegal Aliens and Using a Firearm During a Crime of Violence.

Mancinas-Flores, along with at least two others, were part of a violent group of alien smugglers. In October 2005, they were found holding 15 illegal aliens, including a 3-year-old girl, in a house in Phoenix. While at the house, the illegal aliens were held at gunpoint and threatened with death. In addition, two adult female victims were sexually assaulted at gunpoint by Mancinas-Flores. Three of the victims of the hostage taking ordeal gave emotional testimony at trial.

U.S. Attorney Diane J. Humetewa stated that “the court’s sentence accurately encompasses the scope and violence that characterizes human smuggling in Arizona. ICE and the Phoenix Police Department are to be congratulated for their success in bringing violent criminals, such as the ones in this case, to justice.”

“Targeting smugglers who prey on human beings is a top priority of ICE,” said Alonzo Peña, Special Agent in Charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Arizona. “Alien smugglers have a callous disregard for the value of human life. We will continue to aggressively pursue these types of alien smuggling cases, in which lives are jeopardized for personal profit.”

When sentencing Mancinas-Flores, Judge Silver found the aliens held at the house were vulnerable due to their illegal status in the United States. The judge imposed the maximum term of life for the two hostage taking counts because she found that he committed the crimes with malice. In addition to the life sentence, Mancinas-Flores received concurrent 10 year terms for the two Harboring charges and received a seven year consecutive term for the Use of a Firearm during the hostage taking. Mancinas-Flores’ co-defendant, Vasquez-Vera, who was not involved in the sexual assaults, pleaded guilty to possession or use of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence and was sentenced to 84 months in federal prison on September 10, 2007.

The investigation leading to the guilty verdict and sentence was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Phoenix Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Lisa Jennis Settel, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

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