



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MEXICAN CITIZEN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR SMUGGLING 4-YEAR-OLD BOY

TUCSON, Ariz. – Maria del Rosario Hernandez-Rodriguez, 29, of Nogales, Sonora, Mexico., was sentenced on Friday, June 13, 2008 by U.S. District Chief Judge John M. Roll to 15 months in federal prison. Hernandez-Rodriguez pleaded guilty on April 1, 2008 to conspiracy to transport an illegal alien for financial gain. Hernandez-Rodriguez, a Mexican citizen with a laser visa authorizing entry to the United States, is also pending removal proceedings from the U.S. as a result of this conviction. During the hearing Chief Judge Roll commented that this was his 59th child smuggling case.

Hernandez-Rodriguez admitted that on January 18, 2008, she attempted entry to the United States from Mexico via the pedestrian lane at the Port of Entry in Nogales, Ariz. with a 4-year-old male undocumented alien. Hernandez-Rodriguez also had her 3-year-old daughter with her at the time and presented her daughter's valid laser visa for entry. Hernandez-Rodriguez told the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) official that the boy was her nephew and presented another child's laser visa on behalf of the boy. The CBP official became suspicious and referred them all to secondary inspection for questioning.

Hernandez-Rodriguez admitted that a friend had asked her to cross with the boy in exchange for payment with a medical device known as a "nebulizer" which she estimated was worth \$300. She stated that she needed the medical device for her 9-year-old son who suffers from asthma. Hernandez-Rodriguez said that she was to deliver the child to an unknown person at a local clothing store near the port of entry in Nogales.

The smuggled child was turned over to the custody of the Mexican Department of Family Services (the Mexican equivalent of U.S. Child Protective Services) and has been reunited with his family.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Nogales. The prosecution was handled by Raquel Arellano, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

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