



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **CALIF. MAN SENTENCED TO 5 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR MULTIPLE ALIEN SMUGGLING CHARGES**

TUCSON, Ariz. – Kenneth George Claunch, Jr., 54, of Bakersfield, Calif., was sentenced here yesterday to five years in federal prison by U.S. District Judge Frank R. Zapata. Claunch was found guilty by a federal jury on February 29, 2008 of Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens for Profit with Endangerment, three counts of Attempted Transportation of an Illegal Alien for Profit, and three counts of Attempted Bringing In Illegal Aliens for Profit. In one of the three counts of Attempted Transportation of an Illegal Alien for Profit, the jury also found that an alien had been endangered.

In April 2007, Claunch applied for entry into the U.S. from Mexico by driving a carpet cleaning van through the DeConcini Port of Entry. Claunch was referred to secondary inspection after he gave inconsistent statements to U.S. Customs and Border Protection officials. While questioning Claunch, CBP officials saw one of two large metal containers, resembling large water containers in the rear of the vehicle, move. They found that one of the large containers had five adult males inside and the second container had one adult male and two adult females inside.

All eight of the individuals admitted that they were not citizens of the U.S. nor did they have permission to be in the U.S. legally. Three of the males were witnesses at the trial. The three stated that while inside the containers they started to have trouble breathing and were becoming dizzy. Two of them began to have really bad headaches. Each admitted that they were to pay approximately \$3000 to be brought into the U.S. and transported to their final destination. Each related that they had been taken to a house with a garage on the Mexican side of the border where they were taken to the van and placed within the containers. They related that after being placed in the containers, the van did not stop until it reached the border with Claunch as the driver.

The investigation leading to the guilty verdict was conducted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection in Nogales. The prosecution was handled by Serra M. Tsethlikai, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR-07-0791-TUC-FRZ  
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