



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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District of Arizona*

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CHILD SMUGGLER OF THREE CHILDREN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR 27 MONTHS

TUCSON – Otelia Villarreal Larios, 50, of Chandler, Ariz., was sentenced here Thursday to 27 months in prison by U.S. District Court Judge John M. Roll. Larios pleaded guilty on February 26, 2008, to Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens for Profit.

Larios and her daughter, Co-defendant Leeann Ortiz, attempted to enter the United States on January 18, 2007, at the Nogales, Ariz. Port of Entry accompanied by three minor children ages 6, 7 and 11. The younger children were males and the oldest a female. Ortiz told the United States Customs and Border Protection Officer that the children were her own and presented her own childrens' birth certificates and baptismal certificate on their behalf. Ortiz also presented social security cards on their behalf (cards that belonged to her own children). Larios told the United States Customs and Border Protection Officer that she was the childrens' grandmother. The Officer became suspicious and referred all of them for further inspection. During questioning, the three minor children gave their true names and stated that they were on their way to Phoenix to join their father and an older brother, both of whom have been residing there illegally for some time. The children added that their mother and another sister were still at a motel in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, where Ortiz had picked them up earlier that day and instructed them to use different names when crossing into the United States.

On February 14, 2007, both Ortiz and Larios were charged in federal court in Tucson, with Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain and other federal alien smuggling charges. The conspiracy offense is punishable by imprisonment for a term of five years or more. Ortiz also pled guilty to the conspiracy charge on March 19, 2008, and was sentenced on June 5, 2008, to 18 months prison for her part in the offense.

The smuggled children were turned over to the custody of the Mexican Consulate who then turned them over to the Mexican Department of Family Services (the Mexican equivalent of U.S. Child Protective Services) and have been reunited with their family.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Douglas. The prosecution was handled by Shelley K. Clemens, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR-07-00286-TUC-JMR
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