



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, July 18, 2008

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MEXICAN CITIZEN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR SMUGGLING TODDLER

TUCSON, Ariz. – Ana Lilian Valenzuela-Ramirez, 22, of Nogales, Son., Mex., was sentenced here yesterday by Chief U.S. District Judge John M. Roll to 16 months in federal prison. Valenzuela-Ramirez pleaded guilty on May 8, 2008 to conspiracy to transport an illegal alien for financial gain.

Valenzuela-Ramirez admitted that on March 6, 2008, she attempted to enter the United States from Mexico via the pedestrian lane at the Port of Entry in Nogales, Ariz. with a 2-year-old female undocumented alien who appeared unusually sleepy. Valenzuela-Ramirez presented border crossing cards for herself and the child and claimed the girl was a friend's daughter. A U.S. Customs and Border Protection official became suspicious when she gave conflicting statements regarding her relationship with the parents and the child's destination in the United States.

When authorities contacted Mexican police with instructions to bring the child's mother to the Port of Entry to retrieve the child, Valenzuela-Ramirez admitted the child was not the girl depicted in the border crossing card she presented. Valenzuela-Ramirez admitted she did not know the child's parents and was going to be paid \$400 to smuggle the child into the U.S. and give her to an unknown woman in a park in Nogales, Ariz.

The smuggled child was taken to a hospital where blood and urine tests revealed slightly elevated levels of Tylenol and aspirin, substances commonly used by smugglers to sedate children who are being smuggled. The toddler was then 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 her family.

Valenzuela-Ramirez, 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.

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

CASE NUMBER: CR 08-0415-TUC-JMR
RELEASE NUMBER: 2008-185(Valenzuela-Ramirez)

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