



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **MEXICAN CITIZEN CHARGED WITH VIOLATING THE HOBBS ACT FOR VIOLENT THEFT OF SMUGGLED ALIENS**

PHOENIX - A federal grand jury in Phoenix returned a 5-count indictment on September 17, 2008 against Adriel Laurel-Vasquez, of Mexico for Conspiracy to Interfere with Commerce by Threats, Violence and Robbery (Hobbs Act); Interference with Commerce by Threats, Violence and Robbery; Use of a Firearm in a Crime of Violence (Hobbs Act); Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens and Transporting Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain. Adriel Laurel-Vasquez is currently in federal custody and will be arraigned on the charges in federal court on September 24, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.

When utilized to prosecute violent crime, the Hobbs Act is charged most frequently to prosecute armed bank-robberies. This indictment is the first in Arizona to charge a defendant for the armed robbery of human cargo.

The indictment and the original complaint allege that August 20, 2008, near Sacaton, Ariz., Laurel-Vasquez and another man approached a group of 17 undocumented aliens who had recently entered the U.S. illegally and who were waiting at a pre-arranged location to meet a vehicle. Laurel-Vasquez had a gun and tied up the guide and another member of the group. Laurel-Vasquez then ordered his companion to demand money from the members of the group. When the vehicle arrived, Laurel-Vasquez ordered the driver out of the vehicle at gunpoint. He then loaded up the vehicle with the group of undocumented aliens and drove toward Phoenix. Agents with U.S. Border Patrol agents stopped the vehicle en route.

A conviction for a Hobbs Act violation or Conspiracy to Commit Hobbs Act carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. A conviction for Using and Carrying a Firearm During and in Relation to a Crime of Violence in which the gun was brandished carries a mandatory minimum penalty of seven years in prison with a maximum penalty of life in prison. A conviction for Transporting Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain carries a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison. Each of the counts also carries a potential maximum fine of \$250,000 which can be imposed in the alternative or in addition to the potential prison sentence. In determining an actual sentence the assigned U.S. District Court Judge will consult the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

An indictment is simply the method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until competent evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The investigation preceding the indictment was conducted by the U.S. Border Patrol and U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement. The prosecution is being handled by Josh Patrick Parecki and James Knapp, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-08-1071-PHX-GMS  
RELEASE NUMBER: 2008-246(Laurel-Vasquez)

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