



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

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CHILD SMUGGLER OF 9-YEAR-OLD BOY AND HIS 2-YEAR-OLD SISTER SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR 18 MONTHS

TUCSON, Ariz. – Fortino Valdez-Perez, 31, of Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, was sentenced here today to 18 months in prison by U.S. District Court Judge Marvin E. Aspen. Valdez-Perez pleaded guilty on October 1, 2008, to Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens for Profit.

Valdez-Perez attempted to enter the United States on July 25, 2008, at the Nogales, Ariz. Port of Entry accompanied by his 65-year-old mother, a 9-year-old boy and the boy's 2-year-old sister. Valdez-Perez told the U.S. Customs and Border Protection official that the girl was his daughter and that the boy was his nephew. He presented his own relatives' legitimate laser visas to facilitate the illegal entry. The CBP official became suspicious and referred them for further inspection.

During additional questioning, Valdez-Perez continued to maintain that the girl was his daughter and that the boy was his nephew. However, when the boy was questioned, he gave his true identity and that of his little sister and said that the documents presented did not belong to him or his sister. Valdez-Perez then admitted that he had made arrangements with a man in Mexico to smuggle the children into the U.S. for \$500 each. He was given the children in Mexico by the man and was instructed to contact the man again once they crossed into the United States. The man was to give further instructions regarding to whom he was to deliver the children. Valdez-Perez admitted that he did not know the children nor their names.

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) to be reunited with his family.

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

CASE NUMBER: CR-08-1038-TUC-CKJ
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