



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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District of Arizona*

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## **CHILD SMUGGLER OF 10- and 12-YEAR-OLD SISTERS SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR 15 MONTHS**

TUCSON, Ariz. – Maria Arelia Ibarra-Valenzuela, 39, of Sonora, Mexico, was sentenced today to 15 months in federal prison by U.S. District Judge Marvin E. Aspen. Ibarra-Valenzuela pleaded guilty on November 4, 2008, to Conspiracy to Transport Illegal Aliens for Profit.

Ibarra-Valenzuela attempted to enter the U.S. on August 27, 2008, at the Nogales, Ariz., Port of Entry accompanied by two girls, 10- and 12- year- old sisters, whom Ibarra-Valenzuela claimed she was babysitting. The girls presented laser visas for entry into the United States. The CBP official suspected the girls were imposters when they refused to provide their names. All three were referred for further inspection.

During additional questioning, Ibarra-Valenzuela stated that her friend had asked her to transport the girls into the United States from Mexico and that she would be paid \$350 upon her return to Mexico. Ibarra-Valenzuela agreed and went to an area where she met an unknown man and the sisters. He gave her the girls and two laser visas to use for their entry into the United States. The man told Ibarra-Valenzuela to take the girls to a park in Nogales, where an unknown female would be waiting for them. Ibarra-Valenzuela admitted that the documents did not belong to the girls and that she did not know the girls' identities.

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 their family. The children were determined to be Mexican Citizens with no legal documents allowing them to be in the United States.

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-08-01193-TUC-JMR  
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