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Public Affairs
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FOUR MEXICAN NATIONALS SENTENCED FOR HOSTAGE TAKING IN A VIOLENT AVONDALE, ARIZ., DROP HOUSE

PHOENIX – The final defendant in a hostage taking case, Rigoberto Aramburo-Lizarraga, was sentenced today to 11 years in federal prison. Three co-defendants were sentenced in April and May 2009. U.S. District Judge Stephen M. McNamee sentenced the defendants, all of Mazatlan, Sinaloa, Mexico after they all pleaded guilty to Using, Carrying and Brandishing a Firearm During and in Relation to a Crime of Violence (Hostage Taking): Aramburo-Lizarraga, 25, sentenced to 11 years in federal prison; Juan Andres Ramirez-Aguirre, 34, to 10 years; Franki Alfonso Garcia-Sustaita 31, to 11 years; and Santiago Casteneda-Aramburo 18, to 10 years.

Over a period of four to seven days in early March 2008, the defendants held five victims hostage at gun-point in an Avondale, Ariz., drop-house. On at least one occasion, the defendants beat several detained illegal aliens, causing screams, cries and pleas for mercy in a calculated effort to intimidate and terrorize the victims and others in the drop house. The goal was to coerce and compel the families of those held hostage to pay money for their release. During the ordeal, the victims noted that the defendants brandished guns and threatened them with death and serious physical injury should their families fail to pay. After Avondale Police Officers and agents from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement discovered the drop house, they located two 9mm handguns and 55 illegal aliens who they later determined were imprisoned in two small bedrooms on the second floor of the house.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Avondale Police Department. The prosecution has been handled by Josh Patrick Parecki and Lisa Jennis Settel, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-08-0263-PHX-SMM
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