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25 YEAR SENTENCE FOR MAN ACCUSED OF SEXUAL ASSAULT DURING HOSTAGE TAKING

PHOENIX – Evaristo Ortiz-Jimenez, 37, of Nayarit, Mexico, was sentenced yesterday by U.S. District Judge David G. Campbell to 300 months in federal prison. Ortiz-Jimenez pleaded guilty to Using and Carrying a Firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence (Hostage Taking).

Ortiz-Jimenez is part of a violent group of alien smugglers that held at least 23 illegal aliens hostage in May 2008 at a house in Phoenix. Ortiz-Jimenez led the day-to-day activities at the house. While being held at the house at gunpoint, victims were subjected to beatings and threats of death. Ortiz-Jimenez is also accused a sexually assaulting a 16-year-old girl held hostage even after her family had paid for her release. When sentencing the defendant, Judge Campbell called Ortiz-Jimenez's conduct "extraordinarily violent and cruel" and stated "I can think of nothing worse -- short of killing someone."

Ortiz-Jimenez is the first of four defendants to be sentenced in this case. Of the remaining defendants, Carlos Alvarez-Espinoza was convicted at trial and faces life in prison followed by a mandatory minimum sentence of 107 years. His sentencing date is October 19, 2009. Jesus Corrales-Fernandez and Freddy Ovando-Ocana pleaded guilty and are set for sentencing on October 19, and November 16, 2009, respectively. The fifth defendant, David Alejo-Ortiz, is currently in Maricopa County custody pending state charges for human smuggling, misconduct involving weapons and kidnaping related charges. His trial date on those charges is September 30, 2009.

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

CASE NUMBER: CR-08-611-PHX-DGC
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