

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California

***United States Attorney
Karen P. Hewitt***

For Further Information, Contact: Assistant U.S. Attorney Jaime Parks (619) 557-7085

For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - August 11, 2009

Today, United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that all three defendants charged in connection with a June 20, 2009 attempted escape from Imperial County Sheriff's Herbert Hughes Correctional Facility in El Centro, California have pled guilty. This morning, before United States Magistrate Judge Ruben B. Brooks, Roberto Benitez-Urias pled guilty to a 2-count indictment charging him with being a deported alien found in the United States and with the June 20, 2009 attempted escape from federal custody. During the plea hearing, Benitez-Urias admitted to directing other inmates to create a hole in the concrete ceiling of their shared jail dormitory and to explore potential escape avenues through the air duct system. Benitez-Urias is scheduled to appear for sentencing on October 26, 2009 at 9:30 a.m. before Judge Burns.

One of the other defendants, Henry Maldonado pled guilty to an Information charging him with attempted escape on July 28, 2009 before United States Magistrate Judge Barbara L. Major. At the hearing, Maldonado admitted to using a metal pipe to create a foot hole in the concrete ceiling of his jail dormitory.

At the time of the attempted escape, Maldonado was serving his sentence in a marijuana trafficking case. His sentencing in the attempted escape case is scheduled for August 31, 2009 at 9:00 a.m. before United States District Judge Roger T. Benitez.

The third defendant charged in connection with the attempted escape, Jose Angel Hernandez-Herrera, pled guilty to an information charging him with being a deported alien found in the United States and with the June 20, 2009 attempted escape from federal custody on July 24, 2009 before United States District Judge M. James Lorenz. Hernandez-Herrera admitted to crawling through the hole and into the air duct system to explore access to the roof. Hernandez-Herrera requested immediate sentencing and, pursuant to the plea agreement, was sentenced to 37 months' custody on each count, to run concurrently. Judge Lorenz also imposed three years of supervised release to follow the custodial sentence.

DEFENDANTS

Roberto Benitez-Urias (Criminal Case No. 09CR2730-LAB)

Henry Maldonado (Criminal Case No. 09CR2671-BEN)

Jose Angel Hernandez-Herrera (Criminal Case No. 09CR2289-L)

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Deported Alien Found In the United States Title 8, United States Code, Section 1326

Attempted Escape Title 18, United States Code, Section 751(a)

Penalties: a maximum of 20 years in prison for being a deported alien found in the United States and a maximum of 5 years in prison for attempted escape, and for each count, three years of supervised release, a \$250,000 fine and a \$100 Special Assessment.

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

United States Marshal Service

Immigration and Customs Enforcement

United States Border Patrol

Imperial County Sheriff's Office