



*U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Southern District of Mississippi*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 2, 2008**

**SOUTH CAROLINA MAN SENTENCED FOR
TRANSPORTING ILLEGAL ALIENS BY AIRPLANE**

Jackson, Miss - U.S. Attorney Dunn Lampton, and Michael A. Holt, Special Agent-in-Charge, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office of Investigations in New Orleans, announced that **JAMES LEROY PIERSON**, a resident of South Carolina, was sentenced today to 12 months and 1 day in federal prison for transporting illegal aliens via an airplane for profit.

On January 28, 2008, United States Customs and Border Protection (“CBP”) began tracking a small private aircraft traveling from south Texas with an expected stop in Meridian, Mississippi, based upon the aircraft’s previous flight plan. CBP determined that the aircraft had made 3 previous trips from McAllen, Texas, to Clemson, South Carolina. Based upon this and other information, CBP began pursuing the small aircraft from Texas. When the small aircraft stopped in Meridian as expected, CBP agents landed nearby, approached Pierson’s aircraft, and ordered Pierson to exit the aircraft. Subsequently, four passengers were removed from the aircraft and, upon questioning, all admitted to being illegal aliens. Pierson was then questioned and admitted that the passengers were illegal aliens and that he was being paid to transport these illegal aliens via airplane from McAllen, Texas, to Clemson, South Carolina.

U.S. Attorney Lampton commended the investigative efforts of the Special Agents of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the United States Customs and Border Protection. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Mike Hurst.

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