

NEWS

United States Department of Justice
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Leader of Scheme to Sell Pennsylvania Drivers Licences
To Illegal Aliens Sentenced to 75 Months in Prison

(More)

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CAMDEN – A Robbinsville woman was sentenced to 75 months in federal prison today for operating a scheme to obtain Pennsylvania drivers licenses for illegal aliens, who paid between \$2,500 and \$4,000 for the credentials, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Joseph E. Irenas also ordered Altagracia Rosario, 49, a.k.a. “Grace,” to serve three years of supervised release upon the completion of her prison sentence. Judge Irenas revoked the defendant’s bail following her conviction on May 29, 2007.

Rosario was convicted, along with her daughter, Nancy Elgende, 30 a.k.a. “Nancy Miranda,” and Jose Rios, 45, all of Robbinsville, on the charge of conspiracy to unlawfully obtain drivers licenses for illegal aliens. The Indictment also charged others, including Ronald Henry, 65, of Philadelphia, a former Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (“PennDOT”) driver’s license examiner, who pleaded guilty to the offense during trial.

“These defendants enabled illegal aliens to get driver’s licenses and in some cases climb behind the wheel of tractor-trailers,” said Christie. “That’s not only criminal, it’s frightening. We’re glad they are out of business and now serving federal prison terms.”

In convicting Rosario, the jury found that she charged illegal aliens between \$2,500 and \$4,000 for Pennsylvania driver’s licenses that would have cost valid applicants as low as \$31. The fraudulently obtained licenses for out-of-status, deportable aliens allowed them to drive cars, and in many instances, even tractor trailers with commercial drivers licenses issued by PennDOT. Many of Rosario’s clients obtained licenses without undergoing any examination of their driving abilities or their knowledge of the rules of the road.

According to evidence at trial, Rosario altered and created fraudulent and counterfeit immigration documents, such as passports and visas, which Rosario, Elgende, Rios and others used to obtain the drivers licenses for their illegal immigrant clients. At trial, the government introduced various scanned images of United States issued visas in various stages of alteration that were found on a computer hard drive seized by federal agents from Rosario’s residence. In addition, the government introduced as evidence numerous foreign passports, altered and counterfeit visas, birth certificates and social security cards in other individuals’ names, all of which were found in Rosario’s residence during the search.

The Superseding Indictment that charged the three defendants convicted at trial also charged Henry, Lizette Mahsel, 26, of Robbinsville, and Christopher Nix, 27, also of Robbinsville.

Before trial commenced, Mahsel and Nix both pleaded guilty to conspiring to produce

five or more driver's licenses. During the trial, Henry pleaded guilty to conspiring to produce five or more driver licenses. As part of his plea agreement, Henry acknowledged that he had abused his position as a Driver's License Examiner with PennDOT to commit the offense. Henry admitted that, with little or no scrutiny, he accepted the bogus documentation submitted on behalf of Rosario's illegal alien clients.

Elgende and Rios were sentenced on Oct. 16, 2007, to prison sentences of 41 months and 30 months, respectively. Henry was sentenced on Nov. 28, 2007, to 33 months in federal prison.

Christie credited Special Agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Kyle Hutchins, the Waterfront Commission of New York Harbor, under the direction of Executive Director Thomas DeMaria; and PennDot, under the direction of Steven G. Kozar.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kathleen P. O'Leary and Anthony Moscato, Jr., of the U.S. Attorney's Office Public Protection Unit in Newark.

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Defense Counsel: Mark W. Catanzaro, Esq., Moorestown