



PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Elizabeth M. Martinez
Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney
Public Affairs Officer
elizabeth.martinez@usdoj.gov
505.224.1469

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FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS ILLINOIS MAN OF CONSPIRACY TO TRANSPORT UNDOCUMENTED ALIENS

ALBUQUERQUE – Earlier today, a federal jury sitting in Las Cruces, N.M., convicted Manuel De La Torre, 30, of Addison, Ill., of conspiracy to transport illegal aliens after a two-day trial. The guilty verdict was announced by U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales and Chief Patrol Agent Scott A. Luck, El Paso Sector, U.S. Border Patrol.

Manuel De La Torre and his co-defendant and cousin, Graciela De La Torre, 36, of Chicago, Ill., were arrested on June 14, 2012, after they were apprehended in a vehicle with five undocumented aliens near Hachita, N.M., by the U.S. Border Patrol. Manuel De La Torre was released pending trial on a \$5,000 unsecured bond and other conditions of release, and Graciela De La Torre was released on her own recognizance.

Manuel De La Torre and Graciela De La Torre were indicted on Sept. 20, 2012, and charged with conspiracy to transport illegal aliens. On Dec. 17, 2012, Graciela De La Torre pled guilty to the indictment, while Manuel De La Torre elected to proceed to trial.

The evidence at trial established that, on June 14, 2012, a Grant County Sheriff's deputy executed a traffic stop of a vehicle driven by Graciela De La Torre on New Mexico State Road 9, west of Hachita. Manuel De La Torre was a passenger, as were five undocumented aliens, two of whom were minors. One of the undocumented aliens was a Guatemalan national who had been smuggled into the United States near Columbus, N.M., on June 11, 2012. She testified that, after paying the organization a \$2,000 down payment on her \$5,000 smuggling fee, she was taken from Guatemala to Mexico, and finally into the United States. Once here, she and a minor female undocumented alien waited at different residences in Columbus for several days before they were picked up by Manuel De La Torre and Graciela De La Torre at a gas station. Manuel De La Torre and Graciela De La Torre then drove to another residence in Columbus where they picked up the other three undocumented aliens. Graciela De La Torre had been driving for approximately one hour before the vehicle was stopped by the deputy.

The jury deliberated for approximately 30 minutes before returning the guilty verdict.

At sentencing, Manuel De La Torre and Graciela De La Torre each face a maximum penalty of ten years in prison. Both remain on conditions of release pending their sentencing hearings, which have yet to be scheduled.

The case was investigated by U.S. Border Patrol and the Grant County Sheriff's Office, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Luis Martinez and E. Garreth Winstead of the U.S. Attorney's Las Cruces Branch Office.

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