

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - December 13, 2011

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that yesterday United States District Court Judge John A. Houston sentenced Martina Ponce in federal district court in San Diego to serve 95 months in prison following her conviction as a leader and organizer of an alien-smuggling conspiracy that spanned several years. The defendant was convicted by a jury on September 16, 2011, following a four-day trial, of nine felony counts – one count of conspiracy (Title 18, United States Code, Section 371), three counts of bringing in illegal aliens for financial gain (Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii)), three counts of bringing in illegal aliens without presentation (Title 8, United States Code, Section 324 (a)(2)(B)(iii)), and two counts of transportation of illegal aliens (Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii)).

The evidence at trial established that Ponce was the leader of an alien-smuggling organization responsible for smuggling hundreds of illegal aliens into the United States in the Imperial County area. At trial, several co-conspirators, including one former Border Patrol agent, testified about having worked for the defendant for months, transporting dozens of illegal aliens for her.

At sentencing, the judge found that the defendant had obstructed justice through her conduct at trial – by providing untruthful testimony, and by attempting to assist her son in providing untruthful testimony during the trial.

The case was jointly investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General, with assistance from the Customs and Border Protection United States Border Patrol.

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 09cr4424JAH

Martina Ponce. aka Martha Ponce

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Counts: Nine

Title 18, United States Code, Section 371 - Conspiracy;

Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(2)(B)(ii) - Bringing in illegal aliens for financial gain;

Title 8, United States Code, Section 324 (a)(2)(B)(iii) - Bringing in illegal aliens without presentation;

Title 8, United States Code, Section 1324(a)(1)(A)(ii) - Transportation of illegal aliens.

AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General

Customs and Border Protection United States Border Patrol