

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA***

***San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Laura E. Duffy***

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***For Immediate Release***

### **Two Former Border Patrol Agents Convicted of Alien Smuggling, Bribery and Money Laundering Charges**

#### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** – August 10, 2012

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced today that two former United States Border Patrol (BP) agents, Raul Villarreal and Fidel Villarreal, as well as Armando Garcia, were found guilty by a federal jury today in San Diego of conspiracy to bring in illegal aliens for financial gain, multiple counts of bringing in illegal aliens for financial gain, and conspiracy to launder money. The Villarreals were also convicted of receiving bribes by public officials. The verdicts follow a five-week trial before the Honorable John A. Houston.

A fourth defendant Claudia Gonzalez pled guilty on December 10, 2009 to conspiracy to bring in illegal aliens for financial gain, bribery, and money laundering (counts 1, 14 and 15) of the indictment and is scheduled for sentencing on September 10, 2012.

On October 18, 2008, former BP agents Raul and Fidel Villarreal were arrested, along with Armando Garcia and Claudia Gonzalez, in Tijuana, Mexico, pursuant to provisional arrest warrants based on felony charges pending in United States District Court for the Southern District of California. They were then transferred to Mexico City for extradition proceedings and returned to the United States on March 12, 2009. The indictment was handed up by a federal grand jury sitting in San Diego in April 2008 and unsealed on October 20, 2008.

According to evidence presented at trial, the defendants ran an alien smuggling organization to bring illegal aliens into the United States from Mexico for money. On multiple occasions in 2005 and 2006, Armando Garcia led groups of aliens into the United States by walking them across the border at locations other than the ports of entry. Raul Villarreal and Fidel Villarreal then picked up the aliens using their official Border Patrol vehicles and released the aliens in furtherance of their illegal entry into the United States. The Villarreals were also convicted of conspiring with Claudia Gonzalez and Armando Garcia to launder money.

United States Attorney Duffy praised the Department of Homeland Security agencies involved in the prosecution, stating “combatting corruption and maintaining the integrity of our federal border enforcement personnel is critical to U.S. border security. While the vast majority of Customs and Border Protection agents and officers are extraordinary men and women who serve with great distinction, our mission is too great to be compromised by even a few.”

The defendants are next scheduled to be in court on November 16, 2012 at 9:30 a.m., before Judge Houston for a sentencing hearing.

**DEFENDANTS****Case Number: 08CR1332-JAH**

Raul Villarreal  
Fidel Villarreal  
Armando Garcia  
Claudia Gonzalez

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Conspiracy to Bring in Illegal Aliens for Financial Gain - Title 18, United States Code, 371

Maximum penalties: 5 years' imprisonment and \$250,000 fine

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

Maximum penalties: 10 years' imprisonment and \$250,000 fine

Bribery – Title 18, United States Code, Sections 201(b)(2)(A) and (C)

Maximum penalties: 15 years' imprisonment and greater of \$250,000 fine or  
three times the amount of the bribe

Conspiracy To Launder Money – Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1956(a)(2)(A) and (h)

Maximum penalties: 20 years' imprisonment and greater of \$500,000 fine or  
twice the value of the funds

**AGENCIES**

Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations  
Department of Homeland Security, Office of Inspector General  
ICE Office of Professional Responsibility  
U.S. Border Patrol