



# Department of Justice

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## **SO-CALLED "GODFATHER" PLEADS GUILTY TO MANUFACTURE AND SALE OF FRAUDULENT IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS**

ATLANTA, GA - FRANCISCO SANTILLAN ARELLANO, 36, of Atlanta, Georgia, pleaded guilty today in federal district court to conspiracy to manufacture and sell fraudulent Government identification documents, including Social Security cards, Permanent Resident cards, and driver's licenses, and to identification document fraud and aggravated identity theft. Seven other defendants previously pleaded guilty to related charges.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said: "These defendants solicited and sold Government identification documents to illegal alien customers. In many cases, the fraudulent documents contained the Social Security numbers and Alien Registration numbers of real U.S. citizens and legal immigrants to whom they had been lawfully issued. In using these numbers, these defendants acted with callous disregard for the rights of law abiding citizens and residents of this country. Identity theft is destructive and damages the credit, lives, and peace of mind of its victims. We will continue to pursue and prosecute those responsible for it."

Kenneth Smith, Special Agent in Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Office of Investigations in Atlanta said, "Document and benefit fraud poses a significant vulnerability that must not go unchallenged. Today's guilty plea should send the clear message that ICE and its law enforcement partners will identify and dismantle those criminal organizations that threaten national security and public safety and hold those individuals accountable for their actions."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court: FRANCISCO SANTILLAN ARELLANO, also known as "El Padrino" ("The Godfather"), was the head of a fraudulent document manufacturing and sales ring that distributed Social Security cards, Permanent Resident or so-called "Green" cards, and driver's licenses to illegal alien customers. ARELLANO admitted to law enforcement authorities that he employed at least seventeen people in this business in the Atlanta area. He stated he had operated the fraudulent document business for at least two or three years prior to his arrest on March 25, 2008. The ring operated at least two document labs at

apartments in the Forest Park and Lindbergh-Buford Highway areas. ARELLANO admitted that the ring sold about 90 sets of fraudulent documents per week.

ARELLANO and the other defendants were arrested following undercover fraudulent document purchases by confidential informants and an undercover law enforcement officer. Searches conducted simultaneously with and subsequent to the arrests of the eight defendants resulted in the collection by law enforcement agents of over seventy sets of fraudulent identification documents, many of which bore Social Security numbers or Alien Registration numbers that had been issued to real persons.

ARELLANO was indicted in April 2008. He pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy, one count of identification document fraud, and one count of aggravated identity theft. He could receive a maximum sentence of twelve years in prison and a fine of up to \$750,000, and is subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of at least two years in federal prison. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

Seven other defendants in this case have already pleaded guilty to related charges:

- LUIS AGUILAR ROMERO, 29, pleaded guilty on July 9, 2008, to conspiracy, Social Security fraud, and aggravated identity theft.
- FRANCISCO HERNANDEZ LOPEZ, 24, pleaded guilty on July 9, 2008, to conspiracy.
- GIOVANNY TREJO GOMEZ, 23, pleaded guilty on July 21, 2008, to conspiracy, identification document fraud, and aggravated identity theft.
- JOSE RODRIGUEZ RODRIGUEZ, 44, pleaded guilty on July 31, 2008, to conspiracy.
- CESAR VAZQUEZ VENTURA, 39, pleaded guilty on September 11, 2008, to conspiracy, identification document fraud, and aggravated identity theft.
- JOSE LUIS PLATA SILVA, 55, pleaded guilty on September 8, 2008, to conspiracy.
- GABRIEL GARCIA SANCHEZ, 25, pleaded guilty on September 9, 2008, to conspiracy, Social Security Fraud, and aggravated identity theft.

Sentencing for ROMERO is set for September 22, 2008; LOPEZ is September 29, 2008; RODRIGUEZ and GOMEZ will be sentenced on October 30, 2008; and ARELLANO, SANCHEZ, PLATA SILVA, VENTURA are scheduled for sentencing on November 21, 2008, all before United States District Judge Thomas W. Thrash.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Social Security Administration, Office of the Inspector General, Detectives of the DeKalb County Police Department, Investigators with the Georgia Governor's Office of Consumer Affairs, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI) and the participants in a Federal and State Document and Benefit Fraud Task

Force.

Assistant United States Attorney Teresa D. Hoyt is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is [www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).