



Department of Justice

United States Attorney David Capp Northern District of Indiana

M01-204 S. Main Street
South Bend, Indiana 46601

Hammond

South Bend

Fort Wayne

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www.usdoj.gov/usao/inn/

CONTACT: Mary L. Hatton

PHONE: (219) 937-5500

Fax: (219) 852-2770

SECOND DEFENDANT SENTENCED FOR CONSPIRACY TO HARBOR ILLEGAL ALIENS AND MAIL FRAUD

South Bend, Indiana -- The United States Attorney's Office announced that:

On March 16, 2012, Ramon Garcia, 39, of Berrien Springs, Michigan, was sentenced by Judge Robert Miller, Jr. to 27 months imprisonment after pleading guilty to the felony offenses of conspiracy to harbor aliens and conspiracy to commit mail fraud. Mr. Garcia is the second of two individuals to be sentenced for their role in submitting false, fraudulent, or forged documents to the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Previously, in February, Mr. Paulino Ascension-Apolino was sentenced to 33 months incarceration.

According to documents filed with the court, Garcia began working for Ascension-Apolino, who ran Servicios Mi Tierra in South Bend and Elkhart, Indiana, in February of 2011. Servicios Mi Tierra was a business that provided services to members of the Hispanic community, such as working with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles to obtain license plates and vehicle titles. Garcia and others who he worked with prepared and presented at least 285 transactions to the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles on behalf of aliens who are in the United States in violation of immigration laws. Most of these transactions contained at least one document that was counterfeit, and many of the transactions contained more than one counterfeit document. The investigation began in March 2011 when investigators from the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles noticed that individuals were submitting multiple applications for motor vehicle license plates and titles in the name of corporations which had suspicious names.

The Bureau of Motor Vehicle Commissioner, R. Scott Waddell, stated, "The BMV continues to work closely with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies to identify, arrest and convict those who defraud the BMV and illegally obtain vehicle registrations. This successful prosecution shows that we take these crimes seriously and the BMV staff remains alert for these activities."

"Garcia and others conspired to circumvent and exploit the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles process in an effort to help illegal aliens fraudulently register their vehicles in Indiana," said Gary Hartwig, Special Agent in Charge of ICE Homeland Security Investigations in Chicago. "We are committed to working with our law enforcement partners to detect, investigate and dismantle this type of criminal activity."

This case was the result of an investigation by U.S. Immigration and Custom Office of Homeland Security Investigations, the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles. This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kenneth Hays.