



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

**B. Todd Jones,
United States Attorney**

**Jeanne F. Cooney
Director of Community Relations
(612) 664-5611
email: jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov**

News Release

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Former Customs and Border Patrol agent pleads guilty to making false statements

Earlier today in federal court in Minneapolis, a former agent with U.S. Customs and Border Patrol ("CBP") pleaded guilty to one count of making a false statement regarding two men who purportedly threatened his family. Andrew Rodriguez, age 30, of East Grand Forks, entered his plea before United States District Court Judge John R. Tunheim. Rodriguez, who was stationed in Grand Forks, North Dakota, was indicted on January 19, 2011. In his plea agreement, Rodriguez admitted making up the story in an effort to get relocated to the southern border.

On November 7, 2010, Rodriguez called his supervisor to report that a suspicious SUV was following him while he was driving to International Falls. The supervisor ordered him to return to Grand Forks. On his way back, Rodriguez again called his supervisor, this time reporting that he had been pulled over by two unknown men. One of them allegedly showed Rodriguez a video of his wife and daughter and threatened to harm them. The supervisor contacted the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

During subsequent interviews with the FBI, Rodriguez reported that prior to November 7, 2010, he had noticed a vehicle parked outside his home that was similar to the one that allegedly followed him on that day. He added that while on his way back to Grand Forks on November 7, 2010, he had pulled over because he saw red and blue flashing lights behind him. The men who exited the vehicle that had those flashing lights, allegedly approached Rodriguez, and said, "You are going to help, and if you don't, we will hurt your family." Rodriguez and his family were placed in protective custody until November 9, 2010, when Rodriguez admitted he had made up the story.

For his crime, Rodriguez faces a potential maximum penalty of five years in prison. Judge Tunheim will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

This case is the result of an investigation by the FBI, the CBP, the Minnesota State Patrol, and the Beltrami County Sheriff's Office. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kimberly M. Hare.

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