



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**DOMINICAN REPUBLIC CONSULAR EMPLOYEE ARRESTED FOR  
SMUGGLING ALIENS INTO U.S. AS FAMILY MEMBERS**

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and PETER J. SMITH, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Department of Homeland Security's United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), announced today that FRANCISCO ESTEVEZ a/k/a "Danilo", an employee at the Consulate of the Dominican Republic in New York City, was arrested on charges of using his family's passports and consular visas to bring dozens of illegal aliens into the United States from the Dominican Republic during 2007 through 2008.

According to the Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

As a full-time employee at a consular post, ESTEVEZ held a diplomatic visa ("A-2 visa") that allowed him and his family members—his mother, wife, and six children—to enter and reside in the United States. In addition, he and his family were entitled to receive expedited process at passport control at the airport.

Commencing in approximately October 2007, up to and including July 2008, ESTEVEZ took advantage of his A-2 visa status to smuggle into the United States numerous Dominican nationals who posed as members of Estevez's family, using the family's passports and A-2 visas. ESTEVEZ made on average two trips per month to the Dominican Republic to identify aliens who could pose as members of his family and charged each alien approximately \$10,000 to bring the alien into the country illegally.

ESTEVEZ, 48, is charged with two counts of alien smuggling and if convicted, faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison.

ESTEVEZ was arrested Friday upon his entry into the United States and is scheduled to be presented tomorrow before a United States Magistrate Judge in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Mr. DASSIN praised the investigative work of ICE and stated that the investigation is ongoing. Mr. DASSIN also extended his thanks to the Department of State and the Department of Justice Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs for their assistance in the investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney ARIANNA R. BERG is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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