



HRSP NEWSLETTER

U.S. Department of Justice, Criminal Division, Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section

June 2017

Maryland Man Pleads Guilty to Immigration Fraud in Connection With False Statements to Conceal Membership in Military Unit Responsible for War Crimes.

On May 25, 2017, Jose Ortiz Morales, age 55, of Hyattsville, Maryland, pleaded guilty to charges of attempted unlawful procurement of naturalization.

According to his plea agreement, in 1980, Morales joined the Guatemalan Army and became a member of a Special Forces military unit, known as the Kaibiles. The Kaibiles were involved in serious human rights offenses during the time period in which Morales was a member. The military unit of approximately 20 Special Forces soldiers is alleged to have participated in the massacre of over 200 unarmed villagers in the small hamlet of Dos Erres, Guatemala. The massacre occurred on December 6, 1982, when the soldiers indiscriminately killed innocent men, women and over 100 children. Many of the women were raped by the soldiers before they were forced to walk at gun point to a well in the center of the village, where they were bludgeoned in the head with a hammer, and their bodies thrown into the well. Those villagers who did not die of the blow to their head were killed when a soldier fired a weapon and threw a grenade into the well. Morales is under indictment in Guatemala for his alleged participation in these war crimes.

In August 1988, Morales entered the United States by crossing the international border from Mexico into Texas illegally. He travelled to the Maryland, Virginia, and District of Columbia area, where he resided and legally worked for many years, including at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. He applied for and was granted status as a Lawful Permanent Resident in 1990.

On July 13, 2006, Morales sought U.S. citizenship by submitting the N-400 naturalization application to the U.S. Citizenship and Naturalization Services (CIS). On the N-400 and during a CIS official interview, Morales falsely claimed under oath that he was not a part of any group reportable to CIS, when, in fact, he was a member of the Kaibiles and sought to conceal his involvement with that military unit. This false representation was material to the immigration authorities who were deciding Morales' application for United States citizenship.

Morales faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison. U.S. District Judge Marvin J. Garbis has scheduled sentencing for September 8, 2017.

Acting United States Attorney Stephen M. Schenning commended HSI for their work in the investigation. Mr. Schenning thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Rachel M. Yasser, who is prosecuting the case, and trial attorney Christine Duey, of the Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section.

People with information about former human rights violators in the United States are urged to contact U.S. law enforcement: Human Rights and Special Prosecutions Section at 1-800-813-5863; Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 1-800-347-2423 or online tip form at <http://www.ice.gov/exec/forms/hsi-tips/tips.asp>); and FBI's International Human Rights Unit tips form at <https://tips.fbi.gov>.

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