



## U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

For Immediate Release

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# **Fraudulent family case involving 6-month-old represents ‘new level of child endangerment’ according to ICE officials**

WASHINGTON – A Honduran man attempting to cross the border with an unrelated 6-month-old infant last week underscores what U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) special agents have described as an increasing trend of fraudulent families presenting at the border in order to take advantage of loopholes in immigration laws and avoid being detained by immigration authorities.

“Cases like this demonstrate the real danger that exists to children in this disturbing new trend,” said HSI Acting Executive Associate Director Alysa Erichs. “And while we have seen egregious cases of smugglers renting and recycling children, this case involving a six-month-old infant is a new low – and an unprecedented level of child endangerment.”

Amilcar Guiza-Reyes, a 51-year old citizen and national of Honduras, who was previously deported in 2013, made an initial appearance in federal court in the Southern District of Texas May 10, charged with 8 USC 1324 alien smuggling for allegedly smuggling a 6-month-old infant across the U.S.-Mexico border.

On May 7, Guiza-Reyes was observed by U.S. Border Patrol wading across the Rio Grande River from Mexico into the U.S. near Hidalgo, Texas, carrying an infant child.

He initially claimed to the U.S. Border Patrol agents that the infant was his son. However, after presenting a fraudulent Honduran birth certificate at the Central Processing Center in McAllen, Texas, he was referred to HSI special agents for interview and further investigation. He later admitted to the HSI special agents that he obtained the child's fraudulent document to show him as the father and that he intended to use the child to further his unlawful entry into the U.S.

The child in this case, whose name is being withheld for privacy reasons, was transferred to the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services for placement.

Cases like this one have led HSI to step up investigations into similar cases of fraud involving children. In recent months, HSI has deployed 130 personnel to the border, including special agents, forensic interview specialists, document examiners and victim assistance specialists, in an effort to combat this phenomenon.

Last week, HSI conducted a brief DNA testing pilot as an additional investigative tool in this endeavor. HSI is still assessing the results of the pilot, but the technology has already been used to identify cases of fraudulent families and has served as a deterrent.

Between mid-April and May 10, HSI special agents interviewed 562 family units who presented indicia of fraud. Of those interviewed, 95 fraudulent families were identified. More than 176 fraudulent documents or claims have also been uncovered.

"Our goals remain twofold: One, to protect children from being smuggled across the border by ensuring they are with their parents and not being used as pawns by individuals attempting to exploit immigration loopholes," said Erichs. "And two, to identify and stop the criminal organizations that are generating false documents and supporting child smuggling."

The adults involved in this fraud will be presented to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) for federal prosecution for family fraud related crimes including: immigration crime, identity and benefit fraud, alien smuggling, human trafficking and child exploitation.

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