



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Former Immigration Officer Convicted at Trial for Taking Bribes and Witness Tampering**

*SANTA ANA, California* – A former immigration officer was convicted on Friday afternoon in federal court for taking bribes from Cambodian immigrants in exchange for immigration benefits, including granting the immigrants temporary legal status, while he was working in the Santa Ana federal building. The former immigration officer and his wife were also convicted of witness tampering.

Billy Louis Nelms, Sr., 54, of Los Angeles, was convicted of felony counts of conspiracy to commit bribery and defraud the United States, bribery, conspiracy to witness tamper, and witness tampering. Sokhon Nelms, 60, of Los Angeles, was convicted of conspiracy to witness tamper and witness tampering. As a result of Friday's convictions, Mr. Nelms faces a statutory maximum sentence of 95 years, and Mrs. Nelms faces a statutory maximum sentence of 60 years.

The evidence at trial showed that between 2005 and August 2008, Mr. Nelms worked in the Santa Ana federal building as an immigration officer in the Fraud Detection and National Security unit. The evidence showed that during that time, as part of the scheme, the Cambodian immigrants were promised permanent legal status. The Cambodian immigrants were present in the United States without legal status. The immigrants typically paid approximately \$5,000 in cash for the permanent legal status. In exchange, Mr. Nelms stamped immigration documents, giving the immigrants temporary legal status in the United States. The evidence at trial showed that following Mr. Nelms's original indictment in this case for bribery and defrauding the United States in June 2013, Mr. Nelms and Mrs. Nelms tampered with two of the witnesses identified in the original indictment. On one occasion, with Mr. Nelms present, Ms. Nelms told a witness not to speak to anyone.

This case is the product of an investigation by the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Inspector General (DHS-OIG). The United States Citizenship and

Immigration Services (USCIS) and Immigration & Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations Forensic Laboratory (HSI-FL) provided assistance in the investigation.

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