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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Arizona

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, October 21, 2022

## **Second Alien Smuggling Coordinator Pleads Guilty to Bribing Former Border Patrol Agent**

TUCSON, Ariz. – On October 6, 2022, Omar Natalio Martinez Fontes, 51, pleaded guilty to Conspiracy to Commit Bribery and Alien Smuggling. Sentencing is scheduled for December 20, 2022, before United States District Judge Jennifer G. Zipp.

Fontes paid former United States Border Patrol (USBP) agent Carlos Passapera thousands of dollars in cash bribes for smuggling undocumented noncitizens into the United States between June 2019 and January 2020. Another alien smuggling coordinator involved in the conspiracy, Luis Alfredo Quintero-Gonzalez, previously pleaded guilty for his role in bribing Passapera in case CR 21-01529-TUC-JGZ-MSA. Quintero-Gonzalez is scheduled to be sentenced on December 2, 2022, before Judge Zipp.

According to court documents, Fontes coordinated and conspired to coordinate the illegal entry of undocumented noncitizens by acting as the middleman between Passapera and the individuals seeking illegal passage into the United States. While working as a USBP agent, Passapera would receive communication from Fontes and then pick up the undocumented noncitizens along the U.S.-Mexico border near Lukeville, Arizona. Passapera would then smuggle the individuals through Border Patrol checkpoints and deliver them to locations within the Phoenix area. Throughout the conspiracy, Fontes and Passapera smuggled at least 13 undocumented noncitizens into the United States. In exchange for his role in the conspiracy, Passapera received approximately \$104,000 in bribery payments from Fontes.

A conviction for Conspiracy to Commit Bribery and Alien Smuggling carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Passapera was charged separately for his involvement in the conspiracy in case CR 20-01706-JGZ-MSA and has pleaded not guilty. Passapera's case is set for trial on April 3, 2023, before United States District Judge Jennifer G. Zipp.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Southern Arizona Corruption Task Force, and the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Inspector General. The Financial Crimes and Public Corruption Section of the United States Attorney's Office, District of Arizona, Tucson, is handling the prosecution.

CASE NUMBER: CR-21-00792-JGZ-MSA  
RELEASE NUMBER: 2022-187\_Fontes

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Public Corruption  
Immigration  
Human Smuggling

**Component(s):**

Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)  
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