



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TWO MEXICAN MEN PLEAD GUILTY TO TRANSPORTING ILLEGAL ALIENS

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that two Mexican men pleaded guilty in federal court today to illegally transporting aliens within the United States.

Nery Lopez-Mendez, 25, and **Rodrigo Mendez-Lopez**, 33, both citizens of Mexico, pleaded guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge James C. England this afternoon to an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on March 5, 2003.

By pleading guilty, Graves said, both of the defendants admitted that they transported a Mexican citizen, whom they knew to be in the United States illegally.

Graves explained that **Lopez-Mendez** and **Mendez-Lopez** were among the passengers of a 1995 Dodge Ram that was carrying 12 undocumented aliens from Mexico when they were apprehended while traveling on Interstate 44 in Greene County on Jan. 30, 2003. The undocumented aliens, Graves said, were being transported from Phoenix, Ariz., to Seymour, Ind.

As a result of today's guilty plea, each of the defendants could be subject to a sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$250,000. Their sentences will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. Sentencing hearings will be scheduled after the completion of presentence investigations by the U.S. Probation Office.

The case was investigated by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow