



Department of Justice

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Western District of Kentucky

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**ILLEGAL ALIEN FELON SENTENCED TO FOUR YEARS THREE MONTHS FOR
POSSESSION OF LOADED .357 MAGNUM REVOLVER
AND
ILLEGAL RE-ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES**

BOWLING GREEN, KY - **Francisco Javier Vargas-Cuevas, a/k/a Esteban Vargas**, age 48, of 1910 Harvey, Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101, in Warren County, was sentenced to 4 years and 3 months for violating federal firearms and immigration laws, David L. Huber, United States Attorney for the Western District of Kentucky, and Paul Vido, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Louisville Field Division, jointly announced today. Vargas-Cuevas had previously pled guilty to charges of illegal re-entry into the United States and possession of a firearm by an illegal alien. Vargas-Cuevas was deported from the United States in 1998 after serving a three-year prison term for Conspiracy to Manufacture Methamphetamine. The conviction occurred in California. United States District Court Judge Joseph H. McKinley, Jr., also sentenced Vargas-Cuevas to 2 years' supervised release following incarceration. **There is no parole in the federal judicial system.**

US Attorney Huber praised the cooperation of the ATF, ICE, Kentucky State Police, Bowling Green Police Department and the Warren County / Bowling Green Drug Task Force, saying "there is no sanctuary for illegal aliens with criminal drug records in the Western District of Kentucky. Working together we can stop both." Huber noted the defendant was caught with

a bag of \$42,000 cash.

Vargas-Cuevas pled guilty without benefit of a plea agreement. The Indictment in the case alleges that on or about November 15, 2007, Vargas-Cuevas, an alien, was found in the United States after having previously been deported and removed from the United States in or about 1998. Additionally, the Indictment alleged that Vargas-Cuevas re-entered the country without having received the consent of the Attorney General of the United States or the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security to reapply for admission to the United States. The Indictment also alleged that on November 15, 2007, Vargas-Cuevas knowingly possessed a loaded .357 magnum revolver.

Facts from Criminal Complaint

According to the Affidavit of an ATF Special Agent, on November 15, 2007, at approximately 9:55 a.m., a Kentucky State Police Trooper, a member of the Bowling Green/Warren County Drug Task Force, observed Varga's vehicle driving side to side in the roadway and initiated a traffic stop in the 1000 block of KY 100. During the traffic stop, the driver of the vehicle was identified as Esteban Vargas who then gave consent to search the vehicle.

A K-9 unit assisted with the search and the K-9 dog indicated a positive scent on the inside rear driver's side panel. Further inspection of the panel revealed an electronic opening device had been installed to open the panel. Upon opening the compartment, officers located a plastic grocery bag containing \$42,000.00 in U.S. currency. Officers removed the grocery bag and also observed a loaded Smith and Wesson, .357 magnum revolver in the bottom of the compartment. Further inspection revealed an identical hidden compartment on the passenger side panel which was also opened and found to be empty.

During an interview, Vargas stated that the vehicle belonged to his brother who resided in Mexico. Vargas stated he was illegally in the United States and admitted that in 1998 he had been convicted for drug conspiracy in California. Vargas stated he served two years in prison and was then deported to Mexico. Vargas admitted that he immediately returned to the United States where he had remained for approximately eight years, including the past six months in Kentucky. Vargas denied any knowledge of the U.S. currency or the firearm located inside the vehicle.

A Special Agent with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (“ICE”) checked the United States immigration databases for any legal entry into the U.S. using Vargas’ claimed name and date of birth. The checks were negative. The ICE Agent identified Esteban Vargas as an alias name used by Francisco Javier Vargas-Cuevas. Immigration records confirmed that Vargas-Cuevas was deported from the United States in 1998 after serving a three year prison term for Conspiracy to Manufacture Methamphetamine. An Immigration Detainer has been filed against Francisco Javier Vargas-Cuevas a/k/a Esteban Vargas. Vargas did not receive permission from the Attorney General or his successors to re-enter the United States.

Assistant United States Attorney Jo E. Lawless prosecuted the case. The Bowling Green Field Office of ATF conducted the investigation in partnership with ICE, the Kentucky State Police, Bowling Green Police Department and Warren County / Bowling Green Drug Task Force conducted the investigation , as part of ATF’s mandated mission to reduce violent crime and other threats to public safety.

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