



PRESS RELEASE

Previously Deported Illegal Alien Charged with Attempting to Smuggle Illegal Aliens Through Newport Beach Harbor



Tuesday, October 6, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Central District of
California

SANTA ANA – A previously deported illegal alien has been charged in a federal criminal complaint alleging he attempted to smuggle illegal aliens into Southern California and unlawfully reentered the United States after removal, the Justice Department announced today.

Jose Miguel Castro-Duenas, 44, a Mexican national who also uses the name Luis Enrique Santoyo-Orozco, is charged with attempted transportation of illegal aliens and illegal reentry.

He was arrested on October 3, 2026, in Newport Beach and remains in federal custody. He made his initial appearance in U.S. District Court in Santa Ana on October 5 and was detained. A post-indictment arraignment was set for November 9, 2026.

“This case reflects a brazen assault on the rule of law and the sovereignty of the United States, where a previously deported illegal alien smuggler unlawfully reentered our country and resumed smuggling operations in one of our coastal communities,” said First Assistant United States Attorney Bill Essayli. “We will not tolerate repeated violations of federal law or attempts to exploit our coastline as an entry point for illegal smuggling activity.”

According to an affidavit filed with the complaint, Border Patrol agents had observed a white Honda Pilot near Newport Beach Harbor on multiple dates linked to maritime smuggling activity. On October 3, 2026, agents located the vehicle again and contacted the driver, who identified himself as Castro-Duenas. Agents determined he was an illegal alien with no lawful immigration documents and detained him.

In a post-arrest interview, Castro-Duenas admitted he is a Mexican citizen who unlawfully reentered the United States by boat near San Diego around September 5, 2026. He further admitted he had been previously deported in 2008 following a 2007 federal conviction for alien smuggling, for which he served approximately 13 months. He confirmed he had not received permission from federal authorities to reenter the United States.

Castro-Duenas also admitted he was working as a smuggler for a criminal organization. He told agents he owed the organization \$18,000 for his own illegal entry and that each smuggling pickup reduced his debt by \$1,000. He said the organization provided him with the Honda Pilot and a cell phone used to coordinate smuggling activity. He stated that he was at Newport Beach Harbor on the morning of October 3 because he had been instructed to pick up individuals arriving by boat that day. He also admitted he had completed at least two prior smuggling pickups at the same location.

That same morning, U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air and Marine Operations and the U.S. Border Patrol interdicted a boat off Newport Beach Harbor carrying 14 Mexican nationals, none of whom had lawful status to enter or remain in the United States.

A criminal complaint merely contains allegations. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

If convicted, Castro-Duenas would face a total statutory maximum sentence of 12 years in federal prison.

Homeland Security Investigations and the U.S. Border Patrol are investigating this matter.

Assistant United States Attorney Rosalind Wang of the Orange County Office is prosecuting the case.

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Updated October 6, 2026

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Press Release Number: 26-189

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