

House of Death ICE informant escapes deportation charges to Mexico

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After more than five years of battles in the immigration courtroom, ICE informant “Lalo” escapes deportation orders to Mexico. The Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) office ruled Department of Homeland Security (DHS) could no longer partake in fact finding investigations seeking to deport the informant they paid more than \$250,000 to nab dangerous cartels in Juarez, Mexico.

The Appeal’s board ruled in Guillermo Eduardo Ramirez Peyro or ‘Lalo’s’ favor finding there was sufficient evidence that the ICE informant would be tortured and murdered if he was ordered back to Mexico.

“The decision does not leave open any further fact finding and finally is a determination by the BIA of the Department of Justice that Lalo should be granted Convention Against Torture protection,” said Jodi Goodwin the attorney handling the BIA case.

“This is a super-huge victory that has been five-long years in the making. At this point, Lalo is protected from being removed to Mexico where he would be tortured and killed,” she explained.

The next step in Lalo's legal plight will be to force the government to finally release him from solitary confinement. He has endured prison for nearly six years with no television, no computer and no contact with the outside world.

“Lalo was happy to hear of the decision today when I spoke with him, however he does not understand the ultra-huge legal victory as it pales in comparison to the suffering he has endured at the hands of the government in solitary confinement over these years,” Goodwin said.

In a telephone interview with Lalo he explained his position on the favorable ruling. “I’m glad there is no more excuses with the deportation charges. There is overwhelming evidence that I would be killed if I returned to my country.”

“I was responsible for more than 60 drug cartel arrests and convictions, including high level cartel members and the Juarez drug bosses have a very long memory,” he said.

The House of Death located at 3633 Calle Parsioneros gained notoriety in Juarez, Mexico in 2004. The house is located in a middle-class neighborhood of Juarez and it is the location of a murder spree, one that the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would closely monitor.

This case began the way most do. Lalo would be known as informant 913. His new job was spying on his cartel boss and delivering tape-recorded conversations to his ICE handler, Raul Bencomo.

“The government’s reckless attitude for Lalo’s life was astonishing. Each time he crossed into Juarez his life was in danger. But each time Lalo came in for debriefing he had a lot of credible information for us,” Bencomo explained.

It’s no secret that Juarez is presently the most violent city in Mexico and murders take place on a daily basis. But does it mean the U.S. government should be complicit when said murders are known to take place? This is exactly what happened after the first murder at the House of Death in Juarez.

A full five months would pass before the truth comes out. During those five months, eleven more murders will be committed.

A meeting took place right after the first murder between FBI, DEA and ICE to discuss the Mexican Police corruption matter as well as the murder. However, ICE blew the meeting off, according to Sandalio Gonzalez the DEA agent who blew the whistle on the out of control case and is now retired. "This should have ended at the August 11, 2003 meeting."

"Once it was known that at least 12 murders had taken place at the house, ICE would not let Lalo give a statement to the Mexican authorities for several weeks," Gonzalez said. "He finally gave his statement regarding the violence and brutality that took place in Juarez from August 2003 to January 2004."

Lalo was remanded into custody shortly thereafter. He was told it was for his own protection, little did Lalo know this incarceration would leave him in solitary confinement for six years and counting. "I'm treated worse than the really bad offenders and I did nothing wrong." Lalo has never been charged with any crimes, yet he remains behind bars for his so-called protection.

In other words he trusted the U.S. government to honor their promises. The management at ICE promised more money (it's estimated they owe Lalo more than \$500,000, according to ICE employees) and they promised is common-law wife and children safety.

"Instead they have taken seven years of my life that I can never get back, I've got no job, I can't see my kids and the suffering inside of me is very difficult to cope with," Lalo explains.

"I've been kidnapped from my life!"

The ruling this week in Lalo's favor is the first win he has obtained that moves the productive ICE informant closer to freedom.

"The recent decision by the Board of Immigration Appeals in the case of Guillermo Eduardo Ramirez Peyro or 'Lalo', which follows decisions by the 8th Circuit Court of Appeals and a U.S. Immigration Judge, is a breath of fresh air that goes a long way towards restoring my faith in our system of justice. We need to monitor the next step in the process which must be Mr. Peyro's release from custody followed by a Congressional investigation of the cover up surrounding the "House of Death" debacle," said Gonzalez.

While Lalo feels the victory is a step in the right direction he can't help but question the validity of the U.S. government. "I always believed this was the most fair country in the world. After all these years I'm no longer sure."

The case will now head towards demanding Lalo's release. The process contains no guarantees and Lalo says he will turn to a new attorney to get him out of prison. "I guess with my new attorney I'm hopeful of the outcome, but I can say ICE continues to act like cowards."

Lalo's case has garnered attention from those in Washington D.C. and journalists alike. "There are many people working behind the scenes for me, I want to thank them for their help. One day the government will realize they are wrong and I will be free to return to my life."

Understanding the magnitude of the situation Lalo says he is sad he hasn't been able to be a proper father, to be a part of the daily activities others take for granted. "Just knowing that I have a chance keeps me going. I now know this little victory can lead to me winning the war and walking out a free man."

A new chance, a new attorney

“I am very pleased to see there is still some flicker of justice in the sense that the government can no longer deport Lalo. Of course, I hope that people realize that the BIA’s decision won’t result in him being released, or preventing them from planting something on him so he can continue to be held. I have seen how our government handles cases when they want to discredit someone or make something go away. However, this is where his new counsel, Steve Cohen, my longtime friend and one of our organization's Associate Counsels, can step up and bring him even further relief,” said Andy Ramirez, president of the non-profit Law Enforcement Officers Advocates Council.

Ramirez has personally seen Cohen's work in difficult cases such as U.S. vs. Customs Officer Robert Rhodes a few years back. Officer Rhodes was prosecuted at the request of the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China who personally called then Secretary of State Colin Powell, and DHS Secretary Tom Ridge after an incident that resulted in the apprehension of one drug trafficker who was meeting up with three Chinese Nationals with expired Visas at the Niagara Falls, NY Port of Entry.

Within hours of the minister's calls to his counterpart Powell and to Sec. Ridge, Rhodes was ordered back to the Port, arrested, and prosecuted. With Cohen's skill and expertise, Officer Rhodes took on the full weight of the U.S. and Beijing Governments and won the sole 12-0 acquittal in what Ramirez has called the (U.S.) War on Law Enforcement.

The purpose of this case, like those that took place along the U.S. - Mexico border was to give a scalp to a foreign government while sending a powerful message to the agents and officers protecting America. “However, the Rhodes case, without question, was the most egregious and I would know having investigated as many as I have,” Ramirez said.

“The Bush and Obama Administrations know that this is a torture/murder case and the rule of law clearly went out the window under the knowledge of the highest ranking officials in Washington, DC and Mexico City. That is the very reason why our government continued to fight to deport "Lalo" the ICE Informant as he is a material witness, so they could silence him and as a result, they felt it would all go away,” he said.

The fact remains, those involved and responsible for the case and subsequent cover-up, like former U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton, must be brought to justice, and Lalo needs to be released from the unlawful violation of both the U.S. Constitution and basic human rights by the government, says Ramirez.

“While his previous counsel is proclaiming a major victory, I am not convinced Ms. Goodwin did all she could to secure his release. To me it is a partial victory as he remains incarcerated. However, I know Mr. Cohen will go all out to right this wrong. Perhaps Congress will at last do the right thing and not only put a stop into the continued attempts by ICE to deport their informants, but take a long, hard look at both the Justice Department and Homeland Security and clean house once and for all. It is imperative that they restore their oversight role, and equally important - the rule of law itself.”

The only certainty with the House of Death case and Lalo’s unlawful imprisonment is justice has not been served and until those involved are fully investigated, including U.S. officials (retired and active duty alike), will Lalo be able to look back at these dark years and know he did the right thing.

**Note: Thanks to Kim Dvorak for her work since Fall 2009, and to Bill Conroy at NarcoNews.com for his continued work over the past few years - - LEOAC Board*