Department of Justice

FORMER ATF AGENT PLEADS GUILTY TO MAKING FALSE STATEMENTS

WASHINGTON – Ramon Bazan, a former Special Agent of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), pleaded guilty today in U.S. District Court in the District of Columbia to a one-count criminal information charging him with making false statements in connection with a series of fraudulent visa referrals, announced Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Criminal Division.

According to court documents, Bazan, 57, served as the ATF Assistant Country Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, Mexico, from 2003 to 2008. During this time, the embassy maintained a visa referral program that helped expedite the processing of non-immigrant visa applications for Mexican nationals and other foreign citizens, whose travel to the United States would advance the national interests of the United States or U.S. diplomacy efforts in Mexico. As the ATF Assistant Country Attaché, Bazan had the authority to make visa referrals through this program.

From February 2006 through August 2008, Bazan submitted fraudulent visa referrals on behalf of Mexican nationals who were friends, and in some instances relatives, of Bazan's colleagues. According to court documents, Bazan admitted that in connection with these referrals, he falsely represented that the visa applicants were official ATF contacts and that the applicants provided assistance necessary to the ATF. Bazan also admitted that he falsely claimed that certain applicants were associated with the ATF canine program and that the purpose of the applicants' travel to the United States was to visit the ATF canine facility in Front Royal, Va. In fact, according to the court document, the individuals on whose behalf Bazan submitted the fraudulent visa referrals were not official contacts of the ATF, had not provided assistance to the ATF and were not associated with the ATF canine program.

Bazan faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison, a $250,000 fine and three years of supervised release following his prison term. Bazan's sentencing is scheduled for July 9, 2010, before U.S. District Court Judge Paul L. Friedman.

This case is being prosecuted by Trial Attorneys Justin V. Shur and Marc E. Levin of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section. This case is being investigated by the Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General; U.S. State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security; and ATF's Office of Professional Responsibility.

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