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HAWAII RESIDENT SENTENCED TO 18 MONTHS IN PRISON IN CAMBODIAN ADOPTION CONSPIRACY

LAURYN GALINDO, age 53, was sentenced to 18 months in prison, 3 years of supervised release, 300 hours of community service, and more than \$60,000 dollars in restitution by U.S. District Court Judge Thomas S. Zilly for Conspiracy to Commit Visa Fraud and Conspiracy to Launder Money, and Structuring of Financial Transactions. In addition GALINDO is ordered to forfeit the proceeds of her crime to the government in the form of her home in Hawaii worth \$1.4 million, and the value of her Jaguar (approx \$25,000). In July of 2004 GALINDO admitted she organized the scheme whereby some Cambodian children were taken from their families and represented on immigration forms as orphans. In sentencing GALINDO today Judge Zilly stated: "conduct regarding children who were taken from their families far outweighs all the other good work you did for other children."

This case stems from a two year investigation into the adoption of Cambodian infants by American families in which material misrepresentations as to the orphan status and identities of the infants were made by GALINDO to the State Department and to the former Immigration and Naturalization Service, whose functions are now carried out by the Department of Homeland Security. The misrepresentations were made from 1997 thru 2001 in order to obtain visas for the infants to travel with their adopting parents to the United States.

"This investigation focused on a scheme that treated hundreds of children as nothing more than commodities," said Leigh Winchell, special agent-in-charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in Seattle. "Their criminal behavior exploited not only our nation's immigration system, but defrauded hundreds of well-meaning American parents who wanted nothing more than to

provide orphans with a loving home.”

On December 10, 2003, LYNN DEVIN, the sister of LAURYN GALINDO entered a plea of guilty to related charges. DEVIN will be sentenced next month. Both GALINDO and DEVIN committed the offenses using Seattle International Adoptions (SIA), a Seattle based company. The government plans to take no action which would jeopardize the residency status of Cambodian children in the United States who were adopted thru SIA.

At the sentencing hearing GALINDO’s defense attorney argued that the Judge should consider his client’s charitable work and mental state and sentence his client to probation. Judge Zilly rejected those arguments saying her “charitable work made it possible to commit the crimes” and noting that while there had been a great deal of discussion about GALINDO’s childhood trauma, his concern was the trauma suffered by children “ripped from their parents, and robbed of their identities.”

The case was jointly prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jim Lord of the Western District of Washington and Trial Attorney Michael Barr of the Domestic Security Section of the Department of Justice. Michael Seabright, Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Hawaii assisted in the prosecution. The case was investigated by the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement of the Department of Homeland Security, and the Internal Revenue Service.

For additional information please contact Emily Langlie, Public Affairs Officer for the United States Attorne ’s Office, Western District of Washin ton at 206-553-4110.