

U.S. Customs and Border Protection

News Release

April 13, 2009

**CBP Officers Seize \$1 Million in Undeclared Outbound Currency  
from FAST Driver at World Trade Bridge**

Laredo, Texas – U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers at the Laredo Port of Entry conducting outbound operations this Easter weekend and seized \$1 million in undeclared currency from a driver enrolled in a trusted shipper program.

The seizure occurred about 2 p.m. on April 11, 2009 at World Trade Bridge. CBP officers conducting outbound (southbound) inspections referred a 1999 Freightliner tractor hauling a shipment of appliances driven by Jose Luis Martinez Gonzalez, a 26-year-old Mexican citizen from Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico for a secondary examination. The driver gave a negative declaration for currency in excess of \$10,000, weapons or ammunition. A routine inspection of the tractor cab resulted in a canine alert to the mattress in the sleeper cab area. A non-intrusive imaging system scan indicated anomalies in the same area. A closer visual inspection of the area revealed tape-wrapped bundles revealing U. S. currency hidden under the mattress. CBP officers discovered bundles containing \$1,000,035 in undeclared currency underneath the mattress in the sleeper area of the cab. CBP officers arrested Martinez Gonzalez on federal bulk cash smuggling charges and turned him over to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) special agents who investigated the seizure. The tractor was seized by CBP officers.

“Our CBP officers working hand in glove in southbound inspections together with Border Patrol agents and ICE special agents have been making excellent bulk currency interceptions in the outbound arena recently and this is an impressive seizure to add to the accomplishments of our outbound team,” said Gene Garza, CBP Port Director, Laredo.

In fiscal year 2008, CBP officers at Laredo Port of Entry seized over \$3.1 million dollars in undeclared currency in 146 different seizures. So far, in fiscal year 2009, CBP officers have seized over \$9.9 million dollars in 62 different seizures.

Individuals are permitted to carry any amount of currency or monetary instruments into or out of the U.S. However, if the quantity is \$10,000 or higher, they must formally report the currency to CBP. Failure to declare may result in seizure of the currency and/or arrest. An individual may petition for the return of currency seized by CBP officers, but the petitioner must prove that the source and intended use of the currency was legitimate.

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