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Texas Man Admits Role in Fatal Migrant Kidnapping Plot in Virginia

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– Categories: Crime



A Texas man has pleaded guilty to federal charges linked to a human smuggling and kidnapping plot that ended in a deadly shooting in Charlottesville, Virginia, in early 2023.

Jordan Perez, 21, of Lockhart, Texas, entered his guilty plea on Tuesday to two serious offenses: conspiracy to commit kidnapping and transporting an undocumented immigrant resulting in death. The charges stem from his involvement in a broader trafficking operation targeting migrants who had entered the United States unlawfully.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Perez and his co-defendant, 26-year-old Ricardo Ordaz of Cedar Creek, Texas, coordinated with others to abduct several individuals near the U.S.-Mexico border. These victims, all undocumented migrants, were taken against their will and held hostage as the suspects demanded ransom money from their families.

Two women were among the victims taken to a residence near Austin, Texas, where they were reportedly held at gunpoint. The traffickers demanded cash payments in exchange for the victims' release. In one instance, Ordaz successfully collected \$5,000 from a victim's family in Texas.

The situation took a tragic turn on January 8, 2023, when Perez and another accomplice transported the second victim to Charlottesville, Virginia. The group intended to collect a \$10,000 ransom from the woman's husband, arranging the exchange at Fitzgerald Tire, a business in the city's Belmont neighborhood.

However, the plan quickly fell apart when the husband arrived with only \$4,000. A dispute broke out, escalating into a violent shootout. According to federal investigators, the kidnappers opened fire on the husband, who then managed to wrestle a weapon from one of his attackers. In the struggle, he fatally shot one of the kidnappers, reportedly in self-defense.

Authorities later confirmed that Charlottesville was randomly selected as the meeting point, with no evidence suggesting the suspects had any connection to the area prior to the incident.

Ordaz, who had already pleaded guilty to the same charges in June, faces a maximum sentence of life in federal prison. Perez now awaits sentencing on his plea, with similar penalties possible under federal guidelines.

In a statement on the case, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Virginia C. Todd Gilbert said, "Far too often, as in this case, individuals take advantage of those who illegally enter the country, and the results are tragic."

The case was investigated as part of "Operation Take Back America," a national effort led by the U.S. Department of Justice aimed at cracking down on illegal immigration networks, cartel activities, and other transnational criminal threats.

Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Harrisonburg, Virginia, led the operation, with support from HSI agents in Austin, the Charlottesville Police Department, and the Albemarle County Police Department.