

ARIZONA SANCTUARY DEFENSE FUND

UPDATE FOR THE SANCTUARY TRIAL FOR THE WEEK OF JANUARY 28 - 31

Tuesday

Amidst more testimony by Central American refugees in the Sanctuary trial Tuesday, government prosecutor Donald M. Reno ran into problems when defense attorneys brought to light "favors" that the government provided for witnesses it has called in the case.

Candida Nunez de Villatoro, formerly of El Salvador, testified that in January of 1985, government informant Jesus Cruz approached her at her home in Phoenix, Arizona, and offered to get her a work permit if she would agree to be interviewed by INS agents who were working to prepare the Sanctuary prosecution. Miss Villatoro accepted the government's offer, and in return received a document she assumed was a work permit. However, today in Court, Nancy Postero, attorney for Mary K. Espinoza, pointed out to Villatoro that the document she received was in fact not a work permit, but instead was an order to appear in immigration court.

Apparently, Miss Villatoro, who does not read English, had been duped by the government into believing that the document -- written only in English -- was actually a work permit.

Almost the same scenario was repeated with another Salvadoran, Jose Reuben Torres, who also agreed to cooperate with the government in exchange for a work permit. Torres testified that agents who interviewed him said that all he had to do was to "tell the truth." However, when defense attorneys asked him if the government had in turn shown Torres papers "with the truth on them" that were collected during the interviews, he answered "Yes, they showed me papers," but added, "The thing is that they haven't shown me any papers with the truth on them yet."

The INS interviews with Torres also raised the issue of continued failure by the government to disclose all the materials it has that are related to the case. Torres testified that one of the interviews was tape recorded, and that INS agents took notes at the others. However, despite repeated requests by the defense team for any notes and/or recordings of witness interviews by the government, the government claimed it had none for Torres.

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