

PRESS RELEASE

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Fifth Man Arrested in False Auto Claim Conspiracy

PHOENIX – A Phoenix man was arrested in the San Diego, Calif., area over the weekend for his suspected involvement in a conspiracy ring that filed false auto insurance claims.

Edgar Eduardo Renteria-Molina, 22, who was detained in a vehicle at the Pine Valley Border Patrol check point, was taken into custody when authorities discovered a warrant for his arrest from the Arizona Department of Insurance.

Renteria-Molina is the last of five major suspects involved in filing false auto insurance claims totaling nearly a quarter of a million dollars thus far. The ring was broken up by Arizona Department of Insurance Investigators who arrested two key members last month, prompting the others to flee.

Two arrests happened on Nov. 6th when authorities arrested Guillermo “Willie” Altamirano, 33, owner of Champion Auto Body in Phoenix, and Rigoberto Lara-Corral, 48, the suspected ringleader of the operation.

Lara-Corral was arrested on six counts ranging from conspiracy and participating in a criminal syndicate to forgery and identity theft. A third suspect, Samuel Romero Lugo, 23, of Phoenix was arrested Nov. 25th.

Another suspect, Juan Alejandro Villa, 25, was arrested in Phoenix on Sept. 24th for his participation in the ring. He was in jail on unrelated charges at the time of his arrest.

The five men are accused of conspiring to submit fraudulent auto insurance claims against several companies. Lara-Corral is accused of supplying vehicles, fraudulent Mexico drivers’ licenses, prepaid credit cards, prepaid cell phones and forged Arizona motor vehicle titles in furtherance of the fraud. Lara-Corral, an undocumented Mexican National, is in the U.S. illegally awaiting a deportation hearing.

The investigation into the ring began in April, prompted by an anonymous tip regarding auto body shops. State Farm Insurance assisted in the investigation. Arizona Department of Insurance investigators say they are still planning to contact other subjects but believe the five men in custody were the major players in the conspiracy.

About the Arizona Department of Insurance

The Arizona Department of Insurance, an agency of the State of Arizona, is responsible for the education and protection of insurance consumers and for oversight of the insurance industry in the state.