

Beat: News

## Victims Rescued that were Held in Kidnapping for Ransom Incident

FBI El Paso, US Border Patrol, Texas DPS

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**USPA NEWS** - The FBI El Paso Field Office's Safe Streets and Violent Crime Task Force with assistance of the U.S. Border Patrol El Paso Sector and the Texas Department of Public Safety West Texas Region were able to rescue fourteen undocumented immigrants who were being held against their will and threatened. These persons were being held in an exterior structure without adequate ventilation in these extreme and dangerous temperatures yesterday afternoon.

The FBI, the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP), and the Texas Department of Public Safety (TXDPS) continue to see an increase in crimes involving kidnapping for ransom and extortion crimes directly affecting undocumented immigrants who have paid human smugglers to bring them across the United States-Mexico border.

"Since February of this year, the FBI along with our partners have rescued sixty-five victims from these violent and terrifying situations," said Special Agent in Charge Jeffrey R. Downey. "We call upon El Pasoans to report suspicious activities they see occurring in their neighborhoods. It just takes a concerned community to help law enforcement eradicate this violent crime from existing in our city and help protect a vulnerable population. I would like to thank USBP and TXDPS for their assistance in this ongoing investigation."

"This event demonstrates the callous human trafficking activities that Transnational Criminal Organizations perpetrate for profit, extorting and holding migrants for ransom," said El Paso Sector Chief Patrol Agent Gloria I. Chavez. "Our incredible joint law enforcement collaboration saved these migrants from an uncertain outcome. Extortion and holding migrants against their will is cruel, and no one should endure or be victim to the vicious actions of human smugglers."

Many undocumented immigrants are kept in stash houses located across El Paso. A stash house can be a house, shed, or any type of structure used to hide illegal activity from law enforcement. Stash houses are meant to blend in, so they can be found even in the middle of a city or gated community. Many of the non-residential structures used pose direct threat to person's life in extreme heat and cold as they are not adequately ventilated, cooled, or heated.

Here are some red flags to identify a stash house:

If you don't know who lives at the residence.

A lot of trash constantly being placed outside homes, multiple water jugs, or disposable plates lying around.

Different types of vehicles, especially vans and pickup trucks, will enter and exit the garage at different hours of the day or night (quite often they prefer to work in the night-time or early morning hours).

The vehicles arriving at the stash house will have different license plates on them, including Arizona, California, Texas, New Mexico, and Mexico. They may often display paper "buyer" or "dealer" tags. They may also use these license plates interchangeably with all of the vehicles.

Large amounts of food and water are taken to the house on a daily basis.

If you are the landlord and somebody is hesitant to provide information or they appear to use a false name or something like that, that might raise a red flag.

If you have any question about whether the call is a virtual kidnapping or a legitimate kidnapping, contact FBI El Paso at 915-832-5000 or call 911 immediately.

FBI El Paso is committed to working with our state, local, and federal law enforcement partners to increase public awareness regarding the threat posed by kidnappings and will continue to investigate and refer these types of cases for prosecution. Tips can also be submitted online at <https://tips.fbi.gov>. All tipsters may remain anonymous.

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Small Village Life at smallvillagelife.com, where I share useful articles and news.

Wendy writes for the United States Press Agency and is a former columnist with the Fulton County Expositor, Wauseon, Ohio.

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