



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT *of* CALIFORNIA

[U.S. Attorneys](#) » [Southern District of California](#) » [News](#)

**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Southern District of California

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, May 17, 2018

## **Airline Staffing Executive Sentenced to Prison for Years of Immigration Fraud**

**Assistant U.S. Attorney Nicholas W. Pilchak (619) 546-9709**

### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY – May 17, 2018**

SAN DIEGO – Eleno Quinteros, Jr., the former vice president of operations for two airline mechanic staffing companies, was sentenced today to 12 months in prison for making false statements in support of legal permanent resident petitions for dozens of the companies' mechanics.

Quinteros previously admitted falsely certifying that he had received no payments from the mechanics, when in fact he had demanded and collected hundreds of thousands of dollars of unlawful fees from approximately 85 of them. Today, U.S. District Judge Michael M. Anello sentenced Quinteros to a year and a day in custody based on his view of the "enormity of the offense."

According to his plea agreement, Quinteros demanded and collected as much as \$567,480 from his foreign labor workers, even though employers are prohibited by law from demanding payment for their fees—including attorneys' fees—in connection with the charged applications. Less than half of the money Quinteros collected was actually paid to immigration attorneys assisting with the applications, while Quinteros himself kept an estimated \$372,715, according to court filings.

Quinteros was vice president of two different staffing companies, as set out in his plea agreement. The companies' staff performed heavy maintenance on aircraft at a variety of airfields nationwide. Quinteros was responsible for recruiting Mexican aircraft mechanics to work in the United States for the companies, and for helping recruits to obtain work visas such as TN or H-2B visas.

According to the indictment, after assisting his recruits in obtaining work visas to come to the United States, Quinteros then agreed to help at least 85 of them pursue a legal permanent residency—in exchange for substantial (and unlawful) fees. Quinteros directed many employees to deposit money into his wife's bank account, or provide him with blank money orders, in order to conceal the source of the unlawful funds. Other funds were routed through a company bank account, where Quinteros falsely described them to the company bookkeeper as a "loan" from him to the company, according to court filings.

Quinteros collected as much as ten or twenty thousand dollars from some workers, per court records. Although Quinteros himself was well compensated by his two companies during his scheme, some of his recruits had to sell their homes and cars to finance the unlawful fees.

On August 10, 2017, Quinteros pleaded guilty to a single count of making a false claim in support of an immigration application, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1546(a). He admitted in his plea, however, that the underlying scheme involved more than 25 immigration documents. Quinteros has already been ordered to pay back \$292,526 in illegal fees collected from 52 of the identifiable victims of his scheme.

“Legal permanent residency in the United States is not a bargaining chip that greedy employers can sell to the highest bidder,” said U.S. Attorney Adam L. Braverman. “This office will vigorously investigate and prosecute those who commit immigration fraud.”

“The Diplomatic Security Service is firmly committed to making sure that those who commit visa fraud face consequences for their criminal actions,” said Michael Bishop, Special Agent-in-Charge of the U.S. Department of State’s Diplomatic Security Service, Los Angeles Field Office. “The strong relationship we enjoy with our law enforcement partners on the Document Benefit Fraud Task Force and DSS’ global network of special agents working together to stop criminals from reaping illegal income by exploiting U.S. visas and foreign workers continues to be essential in the pursuit of justice.”

“As this sentence makes clear, individuals who undermine our nation’s security by compromising the integrity of our immigration laws for their own enrichment will face serious consequences,” said Joseph Macias, Special Agent in Charge for Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Los Angeles. “Working closely with our law enforcement partners, HSI will move aggressively to hold those involved in these types of criminal schemes accountable.”

“This is a perfect example of federal agencies working together to combat those trying to defraud the government,” stated U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Los Angeles District Director, Donna Campagnolo. “USCIS FDNS will continue playing a key role in USCIS efforts to safeguard the integrity of our immigration laws, protect American workers, and safeguard the Homeland.”

## **DEFENDANT**

## **Case No. 17-cr-557-MMA**

Eleno “Max” Quinteros, Jr.    46 years old    Chula Vista, California

## **CHARGES**

False Statement on an Immigration Document - 18 U.S.C. § 1546(a)

Maximum penalty: 10 years’ imprisonment and \$250,000 fine

## **AGENCIES**

Department of State, Diplomatic Security Service

Department of Homeland Security, Homeland Security Investigations

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

## **Topic(s):**

Immigration

## **Component(s):**

**USAO - California, Southern** AILA Doc. No. 18052162. (Posted 5/23/18)

**Press Release Number:**

CAS18-0517-Quinteros

Updated May 17, 2018