

Man crashes into fence in human smuggling vehicle chase

BY LORENZO ZAZUETA-CASTRO
STAFF WRITER

A Rio Grande City man who crashed his vehicle into a fence while eluding authorities faces federal human smuggling charges, records show.

Sergio Gustavo Reyes remains in custody a week after he allegedly crashed his vehicle that was loaded with undocumented persons into a fence in an attempt to escape U.S. Border Patrol agents.

According to the complaint against Reyes, Border Patrol agents were dispatched Saturday to an area along the river in the city of Roma.

"At approximately 6:00pm agents observed several subjects emerge from the vegetation near the river and enter a white Chevrolet Silverado which was in the area. Agents dispatched their observations to surrounding agents and suspected an alien smuggling attempt was taking place," the document states.

The aforementioned vehicle was seen leaving the area near the river.

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State now enrolling providers for COVID vaccine

BY BERENICE GARCIA
STAFF WRITER

The state is now enrolling providers who want to help supply a COVID-19 vaccine in preparations for its potential availability.

The Texas Department of State Health Services is now allowing health care providers to register online so they can receive and administer a COVID-19 vaccine in Texas.

Dr. Emilie Prot, with the Department of State Health Services, or DSHS, said the state is encouraging interested providers to begin the enrollment process as soon as possible to avoid delay once the immunization is available to the public.

"We want to make sure that we have providers that are enrolled," said Prot, the regional medical director for Public Health Region 11, which covers South Texas. "There's specific requirements before they

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Conservatives rally



Photos by Bronte Wittpenn | Austin American-Statesman | AP

Jody Quimby and other protesters walk in protest against Gov. Greg Abbott's handling of the coronavirus pandemic Saturday near the governor's mansion in Austin.

GOP activists continue virus backlash with Abbott protest

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN — Activists and leaders from the right wing of the Texas Republican Party on Saturday continued their backlash against Gov. Greg Abbott's handling of the coronavirus pandemic, staging a protest outside his home as they criticized his orders as overbearing and unlawful.

State party chairman Allen West, Texas Agriculture Commissioner Sid Miller and some GOP lawmakers were among an estimated 200 people gathered outside the governor's mansion to blast Abbott's executive orders — including a continued

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Paula Perry walks in protest against Gov. Greg Abbott's handling of the coronavirus pandemic Saturday in Austin.

MOSTHistory's 'Bearing Witness' to chronicle Valley lives lost

BY MICHAEL RODRIGUEZ
STAFF WRITER

When the Rio Grande Valley's first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in March, no one could predict the precise impact it would have on people's lives. Businesses, schools and churches were forced to close their doors to the public; those providing essential services had to rethink their operations to abide by health restrictions; jobs were lost and a people accustomed to companionship and extroversion struggled with isolation.

And then there was the loss of life.

Much like the rest of the nation, Valley families are reeling having lost 3,000 local souls and counting. People who've succumbed to this deadly disease have left voids in their families' lives, and in their communities. Left are their leg-



Courtesy photo

Sandra Luna, a former employee of the Museum of South Texas History in Edinburg, died due to COVID-19 in July, according to MOSTHistory Chief Executive Officer Francisco Guajardo.

acies, waiting to be told by their loved ones.

For the Museum of South Texas History, the virus hit too close to home when one of their own, Sandra Luna, fell ill with the virus and died on July

12. Recognizing the need to document this alarming loss of life, MOSTHistory has launched Bearing Witness, a series of stories about the residents of the Valley who died due to CO-

BEARING WITNESS

VID-19.

AIM Media Texas newspapers in the Valley have partnered with the museum and agreed to publish these stories on Mondays.

According to Francisco Guajardo, chief executive officer for MOSTHistory, the joint effort is more than a public service that helps identify those who were lost to the pandemic, but a historical collection which will live within the museum's Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives.

"As a museum we thought that we could do two things:

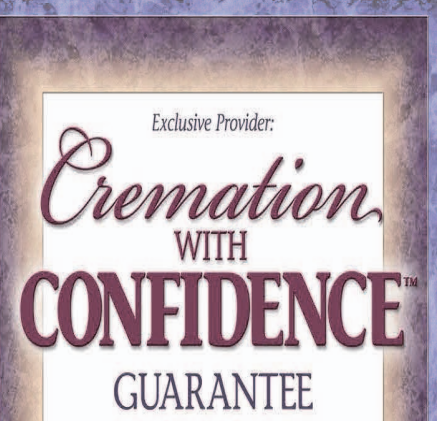
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WITNESS

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No. 1 — create a collection of the pandemic of 2020, because ... we don't have a collection of the 1918-1919 Spanish influenza to look at for how to deal with that kind of historical circumstance," Guajardo said Friday. "Let's begin a collection and grow it to capture this historical moment for our progeny."

The second motivating factor is the museum's function to document the community's history.

"This is our public responsibility," Guajardo added. "We wanted to help people mourn and heal, and so we thought let's do this by engaging in a Bearing Witness campaign, in which we talk to people who bore witness to those who we're losing. It just so happened that the regional newspapers were committed to a similar vision, and so there was an obvious synergistic opportunity. We would do this in a very quiet way, under the radar. So a partnership with the newspapers gives us an opportunity to do this as a public healing with public connections, in which we

can all have the opportunity to grieve together, and ... preserve and present for the public good."

Stephan Wingert, regional vice president and publisher of The Monitor, Valley Morning Star and The Brownsville Herald, shared a similar sentiment.

"It's our moral and professional responsibility to chronicle the lives and deaths of those in our community who have died due to COVID-19," Wingert said Friday. "We remain committed to helping MOSTHistory tell these stories by publishing them in our newspapers and across our digital platforms for future generations to understand what we faced, and what we lost during the pandemic of 2020."

Regarding Luna, even grieving her loss was a challenge in the age of COVID-19 as mourners were unable to console each other — a reminder of what families have suffered through during the pandemic as similar stories of heartbreak have been shared from community to community in South Texas.

This lack of connection — to express grief through an embrace, with a hand

on a shoulder, a kiss on the forehead, or by taking someone's hand — is necessary to protect from the spread of the virus. And it's also a bitter pill to swallow when in need of consolation.

"It hit us in a very personal way. Not only because we were losing someone who was so close to us, she had worked with us for 20 years, but the kind of death that this was, was unprecedented to all of us in a personal way," Guajardo said. "It's personal and it's cultural. The cultural way is we could not mourn together, with her family or even us. I mean we held a meeting to have essentially our own wake, and it was on Zoom. It was very deficient from a human standpoint. We couldn't touch each other; we couldn't embrace; we could not feed off of each other's energy to both mourn and heal from the loss of a very close friend. We wanted to respond to that experience of loss."

To learn more about the museum's efforts, visit MOSTHistory.org.

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After agents attempted to pull the vehicle over, Reyes, later identified as the driver of the Silverado, failed to yield and "accelerated into a residential area," the complaint states.

"Agents proceeded to follow the Silverado for ap-

proximately four minutes as it ultimately came to a stop when it crashed into a fence," the court documents state.

Reyes was found outside the vehicle, and subsequently six persons were found to be in his vehicle.

Reyes, when approached by authorities, declined to provide a statement.

At least one woman, who told agents she paid \$13,000 to be smuggled into the country, said she crossed the river earlier that day prior to the chase with authorities.

Reyes, who made his initial court appearance via teleconference earlier in the week, could face between 5 and 10 years in prison if convicted.

Mother sues over fatal police shooting

BY FERNANDO DEL VALLE
STAFF WRITER

SAN BENITO — The mother of an unarmed 21-year-old San Benito man fatally shot in 2018 filed a federal lawsuit Friday against the city of San Benito and Cameron County claiming police officers and constables used "excessive force" and the entities failed to properly train lawmen involved in the shooting.

April Flores filed the lawsuit against the city of San Benito, Cameron County, police officers involved, Precinct 5 Constable Eddie Solis and two deputy constables claiming lawmen used "excessive and deadly force resulting in the unlawful shooting death of

Ricardo Treviño under the color of law."

City and county officials did not respond to requests for comment.

Former San Benito Police Chief Michael Galvan and Precinct 5 Constable Eddie Solis declined comment.

ARGUMENTS

The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court by attorney John Blaylock claims the city and county "failed to properly train, supervise, screen, discipline, transfer, counsel or otherwise control officers who are known, or who should have been known, to engage in the use of excessive force and/or deadly force, including those officers repeatedly accused of such acts."

The lawsuit claims the

city and county "failed to implement and/or enforce policies and procedures" and failed to "adequately supervise and discipline" the police officers involved.

The lawsuit claims the officers "knowingly and consciously disregarded" Treviño's rights.

SHOOTING ALLEGATIONS

The lawsuit claims the officers and deputy constables "surrounded Treviño's vehicle reminiscent of an old-time Western lynch mob determined to carry out an execution."

The lawsuit accuses officers of blocking Treviño car as he "attempted to move out of the cul-de-sac through an opening between the (police) vehicles."

VACCINE

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actually get approved, and so this is the phase one of our vaccine program."

To get the word out, Prot said the state would be communicating through media and create messaging around the vaccine and around the enrollment of providers so that they could get an accurate count.

"The feds are going to be working directly with some of the larger pharmacies, so Walgreens and CVS, to also become vaccinators for a COVID-19 vaccine once it comes out," Prot added. "Right now, the trials are still ongoing."

At this point, the state is still in phase zero in the process of making the vaccine available to the public.

"Phase zero is our communications plan," Prot said. "We're building those private and public partnerships and we're planning the logistics of statewide vaccination program."

Phase one is when an

expert panel will decide which groups will be prioritized to receive the vaccine.

"We want to make sure that it's reaching the prioritized population," she said.

Phase two will entail providing equitable access to vaccinations for all critical populations and then also vaccinate the general population.

Phase three will be providing targeted vaccine access in populations with low coverage and then demobilizing the COVID-19 vaccination program.

"We're still in phase zero right now," Prot reiterated. "What we do want people to understand is that we're preparing everything and we want to make sure that we're thinking about everything that could happen in order to best deliver this service to Texans in every county."

The different vaccine candidates that are currently under study present different logistical challenges, according to Prot.

"Most of them need to be frozen so that some-

thing that we're looking at with our partners on how many days after you take them out of the freezer are they good for," she said, "and what is the storage and handling that is required."

"All of this will take a lot of education for all of the providers that are going to be enrolled so that's why we want to make sure that we enroll everyone early so we can help everyone be ready so that we minimize any waste of vaccine once it gets released," Prot said.

Providers who want to enroll need to provide a National Provider Identifier, or NPI number which is a unique identification number for covered healthcare providers, according to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Prot added that providers must also be in good standing with Medicaid to be eligible.

More information and enrollment is available on the DSHS website: enroll.texas.gov


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Bronte Wittpenn | Austin American-Statesman | AP

State Republican Party chairman Allen West fist bumps three-year-old Marti Granado as hundreds gather in protest against Gov. Greg Abbott's handling of the coronavirus pandemic outside the governor's mansion Saturday in Austin.

PROTEST

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statewide mask mandate and lockdowns.

"Quite frankly, governor, your cure is worse than the disease," Miller said, The Texas Tribune reported.

West, who has criticized some of Abbott's efforts to stem the spread of the virus, read a resolution that the State Republican Executive Committee passed last month calling for Texas to reopen.

"We call upon the governor to do what is right by the people of the great state of Texas so that Texas can continue to be a leader," West said. "And if the governor did not get this resolution, I'm gonna leave it right here, at the gates of the Governor's Mansion."

The crowd also marched around the mansion carrying signs such as "Open Texas Now" and "Exile King Abbott."

Abbott was scheduled for a Saturday morning campaign event in Dallas and shortly after noon tweeted a photo of himself at the Texas-Oklahoma football game in Dallas.

COVID-19 has killed more than 16,500 people in Texas, according to the state's official count, and is closing in on 800,000 confirmed cases since the pandemic started.

The death toll and number of those who have been infected is likely higher because many people haven't been tested and studies suggest they can be infected and not feel sick.

The demonstration on Saturday came days before Texas voters begin early voting and as the nation's largest red state has refused to expand mail-in voting, which has gained popularity nationwide during the pandemic. Polls show unusually tight races in America's biggest

red state, putting Republicans on the offensive as Democrats see their best chance of seizing control of the state House of Representatives for the first time in two decades.

In September, West and others escalated their feud with Abbott by filing a lawsuit straight to the Texas Supreme Court looking to stop the governor's six-day extension of early voting. They argue Abbott was not authorized to do so without input from the state Legislature, which is out of session this year and won't meet again until January.

West has suggested without evidence that expanding voting in any form will invite fraud. Voter fraud is exceedingly rare in the United States.

Earlier this week, Abbott lifted his shutdown order on bars that has been in place since June, though he gave county leaders control to keep them closed locally.



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