

Smuggling, Via Portable Toilet

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Police have charged three people with trying to smuggle at least 17 illegal immigrants across the Mexican border by cramming them into a portable toilet, officials said.

A spokesman said the border patrol discovered the would-be immigrants in a "portoilet" strapped to the back of a pick-up truck as they stopped near the small California town of Pine Valley five miles north of the border Tuesday.

"They were pretty much stacked up inside there," said Border Patrol spokesman Ron Henley.

He said the agency had been tipped off by a source several weeks ago that smugglers might try the novel approach, and he noted that the toilet, designed for handicapped individuals, was larger than standard ones.

The three U.S. citizens were jailed on alien smuggling charges. Fifteen Mexican citizens were returned home, and the other two were being held as material witnesses to testify against their alleged smugglers, Henley said.

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