

## National Briefing Southwest: Texas: Judge Dismisses Smuggling Charges

The New York Times

December 17, 2004 Friday, Late Edition - Final

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**Section:** Section A; Column 4; **National** Desk; Pg. 24

**Length:** 138 words

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### **Body**

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**Charges** against one of three defendants on trial in the deaths of 19 illegal immigrants **smuggled** into the United States from Mexico were **dismissed** by a **judge** after federal prosecutors rested their case. The **judge**, Vanessa D. Gilmore of Federal District Court in Houston, ruled that the government failed to demonstrate that the defendant, Claudia Carrizales de Villa of Houston, had furthered a conspiracy by working at a restaurant that the government contends was a staging ground for the smugglers.

**Judge** Gilmore refused motions to **dismiss charges** against the two other defendants. Eleven other people indicted in the case are awaiting trial or sentencing. The immigrants, locked in the rear of a transport truck, died of heat exhaustion after its driver abandoned the vehicle at Victoria, Tex., in May 2003. Steve Barnes (NYT)

<http://www.nytimes.com>

### **Classification**

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** **SMUGGLING** (92%); **JUDGES** (91%); US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT (90%); DECISIONS & RULINGS (90%); LITIGATION (90%); ALIEN **SMUGGLING** (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (78%); INDICTMENTS (78%); PUBLIC PROSECUTORS (78%); LAW COURTS & TRIBUNALS (77%); SENTENCING (73%); HEAT STRESS DISORDERS (73%)

**Person:** Steve Barnes; Vanessa D (**Judge**) Gilmore; Claudia Carrizales de Villa

**Geographic:** HOUSTON, TX, USA (88%); **TEXAS**, USA (79%); MEXICO (79%); UNITED STATES (79%); Mexico; Victoria (Tex)

**Load-Date:** December 17, 2004

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