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**IMMIGRATION OFFICIAL PLEADS GUILTY TO MAKING FALSE
STATEMENTS IN GRANTING CITIZENSHIP TO ALIENS**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that OSCAR FABREGAS, a District Adjudications Officer with the naturalization unit of the United States Citizenship & Immigration Services ("CIS") in New York, pleaded guilty today to making false statements relating to granting citizenship to foreign nationals. According to the Indictment, statements made during FABREGAS's guilty plea before United States District Judge JOHN F. KEENAN, and other documents publicly filed in this case:

From October 2004 to April 2006, co-defendant JIMMIE ORTEGA, a former Supervisory District Adjudications Officer with the naturalization unit of CIS, accepted bribes from aliens who were seeking United States citizenship and, in exchange, used his position with CIS to obtain for the aliens CIS approvals needed to gain citizenship. ORTEGA, working with FABREGAS and other CIS employees, arranged to approve aliens' citizenship applications without the aliens meeting necessary citizenship requirements, including the requirements that they (i) appear at CIS's office in New York, New York, for an interview with a CIS adjudications officer, (ii) demonstrate proficiency in the English language during such interview, and (iii) pass the required civics and United States history examination. To that end, FABREGAS stated that he had interviewed two aliens as part of their citizenship applications, even though they had not appeared before him.

FABREGAS was arrested on October 26, 2006. He pleaded guilty today to one count of making a false statement relating to naturalization.

FABREGAS, 39, faces a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment and a maximum fine of the greater of \$250,000, or twice the gross gain or gross loss from the offense. He is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge KEENAN on March 20, 2008 at 10

a.m.

ORTEGA pleaded guilty, on July 20, 2007, to taking tens of thousands of dollars in bribes in exchange for granting United States citizenship to ineligible aliens. He is scheduled to be sentenced on January 10, 2008. Seven other co-defendants -- ANDREA PEGUERO SANTILLANA, BLAS ISRAEL DIAZ, JOSE LORA, BILERACA SANTANA, ALBERTO COLON, JAMLET GARCIA, and JOSE ALMONTE -- also pleaded guilty in this case. The cases against RAFAELINA PICHARDO and DIALICIA CABA are pending.

Mr. GARCIA thanked the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General's Office for their efforts in the investigation.

This case is being handled by the Office's Public Corruption Unit. Assistant United States Attorney CHRISTINE Y. WONG is in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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