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PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
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**FORMER INSURANCE AGENCY SUPERVISOR AND HIS WIFE CHARGED
WITH CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT MONEY LAUNDERING**

Las Cruces residents Joseph Montes, 38, and Deniece Sanchez-Montes, 33, were arrested on federal conspiracy charges on July 13, 2010, by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). According to the allegations in the criminal complaint, between March 2007 and August 2009, Joseph Montes, through his position as a claims supervisor at Farmers Insurance Agency (Farmers) in Las Cruces, submitted more than 30 fraudulent insurance claims totaling more than \$100,000 to Farmers' payment center in Oklahoma. The complaint alleges that Farmers mailed the fraudulent claims checks to addresses associated with Montes' wife, Sanchez-Montes, including two mailboxes in El Paso, Texas. The complaint further alleges that Montes and Sanchez-Montes laundered most of the proceeds of their fraudulent scheme through a business bank account in Santa Fe, New Mexico, controlled by Sanchez-Montes, to give the funds the appearance of legitimately earned income. The couple then converted some of the funds to cash or transferred them to their jointly-owned personal bank accounts.

This investigation began in August 2009, when Farmers contacted law enforcement after Farmers discovered the alleged fraud.

Upon conviction, Montes and Sanchez-Montes face up to twenty years of imprisonment, three years of supervised release and a \$500,000 fine. Montes and Sanchez-Montes appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Gregory Wormuth earlier today for an initial appearance. A preliminary hearing will be held before U.S. Magistrate Judge Carmen Garza in Las Cruces at 3:30 p.m. today.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Andrea Hattan. A criminal complaint is only an accusation. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.