

Department of Justice



United States Attorney Office
Eastern District of Louisiana

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TEXAS COMPANY PLEADS GUILTY TO PASSING OFF MEXICAN SHRIMP AS U.S.-CAUGHT

NEW ORLEANS - U.S. Attorney Kenneth A. Polite announced that **GARCIA SHRIMP CO., LLC**, a Texas Limited Liability Company headquartered in Brownsville, Texas, pled guilty today before District Judge Nannette Brown to a one-count Bill of information for violating the federal Lacey Act, in violation of 16 U.S.C. §§ 3372(d)(2), 3373(d)(3)(A).

According to court documents, in early October 2012, **GARCIA SHRIMP** purchased 35,000 pounds of Mexican shrimp from Mexican businessmen. The shrimp was packaged in plastic crates typically used by Mexican supermarket wholesalers. After taking receipt of the shrimp, company personnel removed product of Mexico labels from the packages containing the shrimp and attached new tags indicating that the shrimp was caught in U.S. waters. Company personnel also conducted an offloading ruse, whereby the shrimp was trucked down to **GARCIA SHRIMP**'s dock facility and then re-weighed and wrapped to make it appear as if the shrimp was caught by a local U.S. flagged fishing vessel. Then company personnel created false documents and bills of lading that falsely read, "Product of U.S.A., Wild Caught Gulf Shrimp." On or about October 12, 2012, **GARCIA SHRIMP** sold the shrimp to a New Orleans based seafood distributor.

Pursuant to the Plea Agreement with the Government, **GARCIA SHRIMP** agreed to pay a criminal fine of \$150,000. **GARCIA SHRIMP** also agreed to be placed on probation for three years and be subject to increased labeling, recordkeeping, and auditing requirements. The 35,000 pounds of shrimp was previously seized and sold in a forfeiture auction for \$120,800. Sentencing is scheduled for September 24, 2015.

U.S. Attorney Polite praised the work of the U.S. Department of Commerce NOAA Office of Law Enforcement, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries in investigating

this matter. Eastern District of Louisiana Assistant U. S. Attorney Spiro G. Latsis and Department of Justice Trial Attorney Christopher L. Hale with the Environmental Crimes Section in Washington D.C. are in charge of the prosecution.

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