



Multi-tiered imaging technology solutions in border region help stop inbound and outbound smugglers

Multiple convictions in International truck theft conspiracy from forensic evidence provided by Perceptics' license plate readers and driver cameras

Advanced multi-tiered imaging technology installed to enhance international border security and interdiction efforts recently paid off in the battle against illegal activity. Federal prosecutors recently won a conviction against Houston resident Yuri David Melendez, the leader of an international organization that smuggled millions of dollars of stolen trucks and heavy equipment out of the United States and into Mexico.

Two key missions for international border security and interdiction is to maintain secure national borders for the facilitation of legal commerce, while stopping the traffic of illegal weapons, people, drugs and property. Evidence that helped to convict 43-year-old Melendez included images captured by [License Plate Reader \(LPR\)](#) and Driver Imaging System (DIS) surveillance cameras strategically placed in Falfurrias Texas, an inland security checkpoint 30-miles from the Mexican border. These integrated imaging systems were produced by [Perceptics](#), LLC, of Knoxville, Tennessee and supplied to the DEA with the purpose of utilizing technology to enhancing the agency's investigative tools used for interdiction missions.

"Mission critical imaging systems play a significant role in securing international borders and key inland security checkpoints," says Perceptics' Security & Traffic Management president, Orlando Carrasco. "We're proud that the accuracy of our imaging system information played a key role in building the forensic case against this theft ring."

[Perceptics' License Plate Reader](#) is designed to uniquely capture the state or country of origin of the vehicle's license plate and performs at a 95% accuracy level. The system captures and processes the vehicle plate, scene and driver images, and then transmits these images and license plate information to a secure database to check for any suspect activity associated with that vehicle. This gives the Agent real-time risk assessment information while protecting the Agent from potential vehicle-borne threats.

Investigating agents definitively linked Melendez and his conspirators to these and other thefts by viewing surveillance photographs taken by [Perceptics License Plate Readers](#) and Driver Imaging System (DIS) cameras at the Falfurrias highway checkpoint, according to the Justice Department. The photographs showed more than 20 pieces of stolen equipment passing through the checkpoint since March 2007. In each case, the stolen piece of equipment was accompanied by a vehicle associated with Melendez.

U.S. District Judge David Hittner of Houston in December sentenced Melendez to a total of nine years in federal prison for his role in the truck and equipment theft scheme and an unrelated narcotics charge. Melendez also was ordered to pay \$851,951.91 in restitution and to serve a five-year term of supervision upon release from prison.

According to a U.S. Department of Justice news release, Melendez beginning in 2001 received requests from his contacts in Central America for stolen tractor trucks, trailers, tankers and other heavy equipment. He would then locate the equipment at various industrial and commercial sites in the Houston area, and recruit co-conspirators to assist with the theft and transport the stolen equipment to staging areas near Edinburg, Texas, about 10 miles north of the Mexican border, before being exported for delivery to Central American customers. Melendez often accompanied the drivers in his own private vehicle on the way to Edinburg, serving as a guide and look-out for law enforcement.

Melendez was arrested in Houston after an associate of his, who was arrested with stolen equipment, identified Melendez in a photographic line-up.

[Perceptics License Plate Readers](#), Driver Surveillance Systems and Under Vehicle Inspection Systems have been deployed in more than 1,000 vehicle lanes worldwide, including the United States, Canada, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates and Singapore and Saudi Arabia. In 2009 [Perceptics](#) released a Color Arabic LPR for the Middle East region that uses a license plate's color as one of the variables to determine its origin via optical character recognition.

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