

United States Department of Justice

For Immediate Release

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Fugitive Wanted Since 1982 for Molesting Children in Riverside County Returned to the United States

A fugitive wanted by Riverside County authorities and the FBI for nearly thirty years was returned to the United States this evening, announced Steven Martinez, Assistant Director of the FBI in Los Angeles.

Richard Wright LaGuardia, 66, who was wanted for the alleged continuous sexual abuse of two minor females in the early 1980s, was taken into custody by police and immigration authorities in the Philippines, based on information developed by investigators assigned to the case.

Based on an investigation by the Riverside Sheriff's Department, LaGuardia was originally charged by the Riverside District Attorney in 1982 with three counts of child sexual abuse, including lewd or lascivious acts with a child. A state bench warrant was issued on March 2, 1983, by the Riverside Superior Court in California after LaGuardia failed to appear for a hearing. When it had been established that LaGuardia had fled the jurisdiction of California, the FBI initiated a federal fugitive investigation and LaGuardia was charged federally with Unlawful Flight to Avoid Prosecution (UFAP). A federal warrant for LaGuardia's arrest was issued by the United States District Court, Central District of California, on November 1, 1996.

La Guardia is a national of the Philippines and a naturalized citizen of the United States. La Guardia is believed to have been working in the Philippines as a doctor. Investigators in the U.S. and in the Philippines developed information as to La Guardia's whereabouts and arrested him on Palawan Island on March 23, 2010. After being afforded due process in the Philippines, La Guardia was deported and ordered returned to the United States to face prosecution in the jurisdiction in which he was charged.

The successful capture of La Guardia is based on an investigation by the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office, the FBI's Legal Attaché in Manila, the Riverside District Attorney's Office and the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, as well as the Philippine National Police and the Philippine Bureau of Immigration.

La Guardia was escorted to the United States by an FBI agent and an official with the Philippine Immigration Bureau on Friday evening without incident, and was turned over to authorities in Riverside County. La Guardia is being held in custody in Riverside County jail and will have an appearance in Riverside County Court.

It is anticipated that the United States government will dismiss the federal UFAP charge and that La Guardia will be prosecuted by the District Attorney in Riverside County.