

Immigration case nets 1-year term

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ST. LOUIS — One of three brothers charged with bringing in illegal immigrants to staff their roofing business was sentenced Wednesday to a year in federal prison.

Jeronimo Gutierrez was sentenced Wednesday by U.S. District Judge Richard Webber. Jenaro and Juan Gutierrez, who face similar punishment, are scheduled to be sentenced next week.

All three brothers have pleaded guilty to immigration-related charges that include harboring, transporting or employing illegal aliens.

The men paid smugglers to bring in six to 24 Mexican workers who were recruited by their mother to work for their company, Golden Roofing LLC, court documents show.

Two of the workers told investigators of being brought across the Rio Grande in inflatable boats, driven to Austin, Texas, then picked up by the Gutierrez family. Smugglers were paid \$4,000 per worker, and the workers then had to work off that debt, prosecutors have said.

A fourth brother, Armando, named in court documents, has not been charged. Assistant U.S. Attorney John Ware would not comment about that aspect of the case.

Jeronimo Gutierrez's attorney, Raymond Bolourtchi, said that his client did not have any supervisory role and never transported any of the workers from the border area. He also said interviews with witnesses did not substantiate prosecutors' allegations that the workers had been beaten or kept against their will.

Armando and Jeronimo Gutierrez hail from Berkeley, and Jenaro and Juan lived in Edmundson in St. Louis County, documents say.