

## PRESS RELEASE

# Honduran Man Sentenced To 25 Months In Federal Prison For Aggravated Identity Theft And Related Fraud Charges

Tuesday, December 16, 2025

### For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Middle District of Florida

Tampa, Florida – U.S. District Judge Mary S. Scriven today sentenced Juan Ariel Molina-Salles (35, Honduras) to two years and one month in federal prison for aggravated identity theft, false representation of a Social Security number, and making a false claim of United States citizenship for employment purposes. The court ordered the sentence to run consecutive to his 12-year state sentence in case no. 22-CF-09348 in the Sixth Judicial Circuit Court in Pinellas County for leaving the scene of a crash involving death. Molina-Salles pleaded guilty on September 15, 2025.

According to court documents, Archer Western-de Moya Group Joint Venture II (Joint Venture) is enrolled in E-Verify, a web-based system through which employers electronically confirm the employment eligibility of their employees. Molina-Salles is an illegal alien from Honduras with no lawful status in the United States. On February 16, 2022, Molina-Salles applied for employment with the Joint Venture in Pinellas County and filled out an I-9 form for use in the E-Verify system. On that form, Molina-Salles falsely identified himself as a United States citizen and used another person's means of identification to defeat the E-Verify system. Molina-Salles provided no documents or other proof that he was trained or qualified to operate a front-end loader or other heavy construction equipment.

Molina-Salles was working at the Joint Venture's highway construction site in Pinellas County under the stolen identity on the evening of September 22, 2022. That night, while operating a front-end loader, he struck and killed Deputy Michael Hartwick, a 19-year veteran of the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office. Rather than staying at the scene and attempting to assist Deputy Hartwick, first responders, and investigators, Molina-Salles handed his construction helmet and safety vest to a co-worker, told the co-worker to get rid of those items, and fled. On September 23, 2022, Molina-Salles was arrested in connection with Deputy Hartwick's death.

This case was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations, the Department of Transportation – Office of Inspector General, the Social Security Administration–Office of the Inspector General, the United States Border Patrol, the Department of Labor – Office of Inspector General, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and the Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Christopher F. Murray.

*Updated December 16, 2025*

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