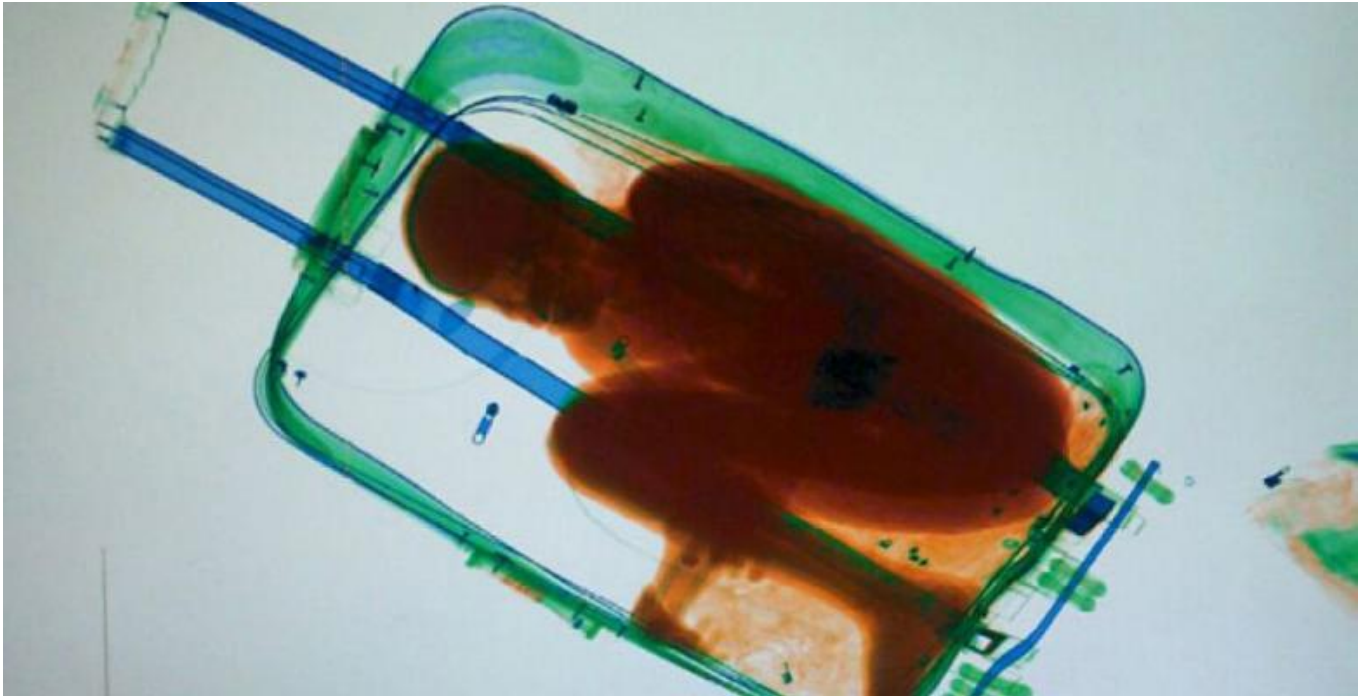X-ray scan reveals boy in suitcase being smuggled into Spain

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Police found an eight-year-old Ivorian boy hidden in a suitcase that was smuggled across the border into Spanish territory in north Africa, an official said on Friday.

A 19-year-old woman took the case through a pedestrian crossing from Morocco into the small Spanish-governed territory of Ceuta on Thursday, a spokesman for the Civil Guard police force said.

"When they put the suitcase through the scanner, the operator noticed something strange, which seemed to be a person inside the case," he told AFP.

"When it was opened they found a minor, in a terrible state."

A 19-year-old woman was arrested for the attempted smuggling of the boy, who was checked by medics and handed over to juvenile prosecutor's office, according to authorities. (REUTERS/MINISTERIO DEL INTERIOR)

The boy said he was eight years old and from Ivory Coast, according to the spokesman.

The Civil Guard arrested the woman, who was due to go before a judge.

They also arrested the boy's father when he tried to cross the border a few hours later. The father is Ivorian and lives in Spain's Canary Islands.

Thousands of migrants each year risk their lives trying to enter Ceuta and another Spanish territory bordering Morocco, Melilla, in search of a better life in Europe.

Many Africans try to scramble over the seven-metre (23-foot) fences that separate the Spanish cities from Morocco.

Others smuggle themselves over the border hidden in vehicles and cargoes or try to swim or sail from shores on the Moroccan side.

Earlier this week a 23-year-old Moroccan was found in a shipping container in the port of Melilla.

He was dehydrated after four days cooped up without food or water, since the container was left unattended over the May holiday weekend.