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For Immediate Release
January 22, 2008

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**St. David Man Sentenced to Life in Prison on Federal Drug Trafficking,
Money Laundering, Structuring, and Social Security Fraud Charges**

Bangor, Maine: United States Attorney Paula D. Silsby announced that **Michael Pelletier**, 56, formerly of St. David, Maine was sentenced to life in prison on Tuesday in U.S. District Court following his conviction in July 2007 on drug trafficking, money laundering, structuring and Social Security Fraud charges. In the federal criminal justice system, there is no parole.

As part of his sentence, **Pelletier** was also ordered to forfeit two automobiles, a farm tractor, three pieces of real estate, and nearly \$21,000 in cash. In addition, he was ordered to pay a \$4,840,000 money judgment and \$83,847.55 in restitution to the Social Security Administration.

The evidence at **Pelletier's** trial revealed that between 2003 and 2006, at a time when he was receiving Social Security Disability benefits, he and others participated in a conspiracy to import into the United States from Canada and distribute 1,000 kilograms or more of marijuana. The evidence demonstrated that **Pelletier** arranged for delivery of the marijuana from his Canadian sources of supply, and hired smugglers to ferry 60 pounds or more at a time across remote locations of the St. John River. The marijuana was then distributed in multi-pound quantities to customers throughout Maine. **Pelletier** purchased the marijuana for \$1,000 a pound in Canada and sold it in the United States for between \$2,200 and \$2,800 a pound.

The evidence revealed that **Pelletier** used the proceeds from his marijuana trafficking business to purchase real estate, vehicles, farm equipment, horses, and all terrain vehicles. His purchase of some of these assets resulted in his convictions for money laundering and structuring. In addition, because even illegal activities constitute "work" as defined by the Social Security laws, and because the evidence revealed that **Pelletier** failed to report his work - namely, his operation of his marijuana distribution business - to the Social Security Administration, he was also convicted of three counts of Social Security fraud.

“This sentence should serve as a huge deterrent to those who seek to operate an multi-million dollar international drug and money laundering operation while simultaneously collecting social security disability benefits,” said United States Attorney Silsby.

Bruce M. Foucart, Special Agent-in-Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s Office of Investigations in Boston commented “This investigation is an example of ICE’s continued commitment to target criminals who exploit our borders and our financial systems. ICE will continue to follow the money trail in narcotics investigations and take back proceeds and assets gained by illicit activity.”

Jeff Paula, Special Agent-in-Charge, Boston Field Division, Office of the Inspector General, Office of Investigations, Social Security Administration commented “The Office of the Inspector General is proud to be associated with the joint efforts of all of the individuals and law enforcement agencies involved in the investigation of Pelletier. The success of which demonstrates a dynamic approach to investigating and combating SSA disability fraud.”

United States Attorney Silsby praised not only the investigation conducted by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Maine Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Office of the Inspector General-Social Security Administration, but also the assistance provided by those agencies in bringing the trial to a successful end. United States Attorney Silsby also recognized the contributions of the Maine State Police, the Aroostook County Sheriff’s Office, and the Madawaska Maine Police Department.

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