

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANNE TITUS HILBY
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200
ANNE.HILBY@AZAG.GOV

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Man Sentenced to Prison in Arizona Arms Trafficking Case

(Phoenix, Ariz. – Sept. 12, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard announced that Victor Varela, 23, of Columbus, New Mexico, was sentenced today to two-and-a-half years in prison, followed by seven years probation, in a major arms trafficking case.

Varela was arrested in Tucson on April 2. He pleaded guilty to one count of fraud and one count of forgery in Maricopa County on July 10.

“This successful prosecution demonstrates the strength of the cross-border law enforcement partnerships my Office has established over the past year,” Goddard said. “Eliminating the criminal syndicates that traffic weapons, drugs and human cargo across the border is critical to ensuring the security of Arizona’s families and neighborhoods.”

In September 2007, Varela fraudulently purchased two .50 caliber rifles for more than \$6,700 through a confidential informant in Maricopa County. Varela also asked the informant to purchase several handguns and attempted to purchase a fully automatic M-60 machine gun for \$30,000. Several weapons connected to Varela have been traced to crimes committed in Mexico by drug cartels.

“I appreciate the excellent work done on this case by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives as well as the U.S. Marshall’s office,” Goddard said. The case is the result of a joint investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the U.S. Marshal’s Office and the Attorney General’s Office. Assistant Attorney General Patrick Zinicola prosecuted this case.

Last month, Goddard signed anti-trafficking agreements with the Sonoran and Baja Attorneys General. These agreements outline the states’ commitment to create a law enforcement exchange and training program, improve information sharing and investigation techniques and establish a task force on Internet crimes against children.

For more information, please contact Anne Hilby at (602) 542-8019.

###