



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Florida

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TAMPA MAN FOUND GUILTY OF FEDERAL DRUG AND FIREARM CHARGES

_____ Tampa, FL – Today, Robert E. O'Neill, United States Attorney for the Middle District of Florida, Virginia T. O'Brien, Special Agent in Charge, Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and Hillsborough County Sheriff David Gee, announced that HECTOR JOSUE VASQUEZ-PADILLA, age 20, of Tampa was found guilty in United States District Court today following a trial before the Honorable Richard A. Lazzara, of manufacturing and possessing with the intent to distribute marihuana, possessing a firearm during a drug trafficking crime and being a felon in possession of numerous firearms. VASQUEZ-PADILLA was arrested in Lutz, Florida on January 14, 2008, and has been in federal custody since that time. A sentencing date has been set for October 10, 2008.

According to testimony at trial, deputies from the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office responded to an apartment complex in Lutz, Florida, on January 14, 2008, regarding a missing female juvenile. After several hours, the defendant exited the apartment profusely sweating and covered with insulation. He told the deputies the missing female juvenile was in the apartment and subsequently the deputies entered the apartment to ascertain her condition. While they were in the apartment, they saw and smelled marihuana. A Circuit Judge for Hillsborough County issued a search warrant for the

apartment and a marihuana manufacturing operation was discovered as well as numerous firearms.

This is another case prosecuted as a part the Department of Justice program “Project Safe Neighborhoods” - a nationwide gun violence reduction initiative with strong support from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). United States Attorney Robert E. O’Neill, along with Virginia O’Brien, Special Agent in Charge, ATF Tampa Field Division, is coordinating the cooperative effort here in the Middle District of Florida with federal, state and local law enforcement officials. The objective is to reduce violent crime by locating and seizing unlawfully possessed guns and then swiftly prosecuting the offenders using both federal and state gun laws.

The case was investigated by ATF and the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office. Assistant United States Attorney Walter E. Furr, III handled the prosecution.