

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - November 17, 2008

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Manuel Jose Romero was sentenced today in federal court by United States District Judge Larry A. Burns, following his conviction of one count of possession with intent to distribute 124.80 kilograms (274.56 pounds) of marijuana. Romero was sentenced to serve 100 months in custody and five years of supervised release after his previous entry of a guilty plea pursuant to a plea agreement.

According to court records, Romero's conviction and sentence stem from his arrest on September 13, 2003, at the U.S. Border Patrol Checkpoint, located on Interstate 8, near Andrade, California. He was the driver of a motor home that contained marijuana and was subsequently indicted. After entering a guilty plea to the indictment on November 24, 2003, Romero fled the Southern District of California and remained a fugitive until his arrest in the Central District of California on April 26, 2008. As part of his plea agreement, Romero admitted that he obstructed the administration of justice when he fled.

According to court filings, Romero has been convicted of crimes 20 times and arrested on seven other occasions over the past 36 years. His criminal history includes such violent crimes as assault with a deadly weapon, robbery with a firearm, robbery with intent to inflict great bodily harm, residential burglary, and multiple felony drug offenses. Court filings also explained that when Romero was arrested in April 2008 while a fugitive in this case, he was driving a car with paper license plates, on a suspended driver's license, in possession of a controlled substance (Ecstasy), and bearing and presenting to the arresting Sheriff's Deputy a false identification and name. Romero subsequently pled nolo contendere to misdemeanor charges of providing false information to a peace officer and driving with a suspended license in Los Angeles County Superior Court prior to being brought back to the Southern District of California to face these charges.

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 03CR2807-LAB

Manuel Jose Romero

SUMMARY OF CHARGE

Possession of marijuana with the intent to distribute, Title 21, United States Code, Section 841(a)(1).

AGENCIES

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

U.S. Border Patrol