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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Man Pleads Guilty in Cross-Border Arms Trafficking Case

(Phoenix, Ariz. – July 10, 2008) Attorney General Terry Goddard announced that Victor Varela, 23, of Columbus, New Mexico, pleaded guilty today to one count of fraud and one count of forgery in connection with a major arms trafficking case.

According to court documents, Varela fraudulently purchased through a confidential informant two .50 caliber rifles for more than \$6,700 last September 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.

Varela pleaded guilty to the two charges in Maricopa County Superior Court. He will be sentenced on Aug. 12. He faces up to 2.5 years in prison and seven years probation following his release from prison.

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 is prosecuting this case.

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