



U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales
District of New Mexico

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACTS:

Albuquerque

Elizabeth Martinez
Executive Assistant U.S. Attorney
Public Affairs Officer
elizabeth.martinez@usdoj.gov
505.224.1469

Las Cruces

Terri Abernathy
Senior Litigation Counsel
terri.abemathy@usdoj.gov
575.522.2338 ext. 233

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**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS MEXICAN NATIONAL FOR
ATTEMPTING TO BUY 700 POUNDS OF MARIJUANA**

ALBUQUERQUE – Shortly before noon today, a federal jury convicted **Ulfrano Olivas-Castaneda**, 39, a resident of Albuquerque, N.M., of conspiracy and an attempt to possess more than one hundred kilograms of marijuana after a four-day trial, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales.

At sentencing, Olivas-Castaneda faces a sentence of not less than five years and not more than 40 years of imprisonment. Because Olivas-Castaneda is a Mexican citizen, he will be deported after he completes his prison sentence. Olivas-Castaneda has been in federal custody since his arrest on September 12, 2008, and remains detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be set.

Olivas-Castaneda and co-defendants **Felix Miranda-Rodriguez**, 71, and **Ricardo Suarez-Soca**, 49, both Cuban nationals, were arrested on September 12, 2008, and charged by criminal complaint with attempting to possess more than 100 kilograms of marijuana. On October 8, 2008, Olivas-Castaneda and his co-defendants were indicted and charged with conspiracy to possess more than 100 kilograms of marijuana, and attempting to possess more than 100 kilograms of marijuana with intent to distribute.

Miranda-Rodriguez and Suarez-Soca each entered guilty pleas on February 10, 2010, and each was sentenced to five years of imprisonment on May 25, 2010. Olivas-Castaneda's trial

was delayed while he underwent an examination to determine competency. On September 20, 2011, the court entered an order finding that Olivas-Castaneda was competent to stand trial.

Olivas-Castaneda's trial began on February 13, 2012, and the evidence established that, on September 9, 2008, a confidential informant who was working under the supervision of the DEA placed a recorded telephone call to Olivas-Castaneda, and let him know that she would be traveling to Albuquerque with a large quantity of marijuana. During the conversation, the informant agreed to sell 700 pounds of marijuana to Olivas-Castaneda on September 12, 2008, and Olivas-Castaneda instructed the informant on how the marijuana was to be packaged. During subsequent recorded telephone calls, Olivas-Castaneda and the informant agreed on a \$182,000 price for the marijuana.

On the morning of September 12, 2008, a DEA special agent who was acting in an undercover capacity met with Olivas-Castaneda at a supermarket located near Rio Bravo and Isleta Blvds. to discuss how the marijuana and cash would be exchanged. Shortly thereafter, the DEA agent and the informant met Olivas-Castaneda and Suarez-Soca at a gas station and arranged to complete the marijuana deal at a trucking yard located on south Broadway Street. They agreed that after the DEA agent confirmed that Olivas-Castaneda had the money to buy the marijuana, the agent would arrange for delivery of the marijuana.

At the truck yard, they were joined by Miranda-Rodriguez who drove up in a truck. After the informant confirmed that Olivas-Castaneda had the cash to purchase the marijuana, the DEA agent gave a pre-arranged arrest signal and DEA agents arrested Olivas-Castaneda and his co-defendants. During the search of the truck driven by Miranda-Rodriguez, the agents found three plastic bags that contained a total of \$192,000.

Olivas-Castaneda testified in his own defense, and denied that he was involved in any marijuana transaction. He denied knowing his co-defendants. He testified that he had gone to the trucking yard with the intention of having a sexual encounter with the woman who, unbeknownst to him, was an informant for the DEA.

The jury deliberated for approximately seven and a half hours before returning a verdict of guilty on all three counts of the indictment.

The case was investigated by the DEA, and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Elaine Y. Ramirez and Shammara H. Henderson.

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