



PRESS RELEASE

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**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS TWO SANTA FE RESIDENTS
ON MARIJUANA TRAFFICKING CHARGES**

*Customs & Border Protection Officers Discovered 430 pounds of Marijuana
in Defendants' Vehicle at the Santa Teresa Port of Entry*

LAS CRUCES – This afternoon in Las Cruces, a federal jury convicted Francisca Lidia Cisneros, 44, and Frank Thomas Vigil, 35, both residents of Santa Fe, N.M., on marijuana trafficking charges after a three-day trial. The jury deliberated for less than five hours before returning the guilty verdicts.

Cisneros and Vigil were arrested on Jan. 27, 2012, after Customs & Border Protection Officers found 430 pounds of marijuana in their vehicle at the Santa Teresa Port of Entry. Vigil has been in custody since his arrest. Cisneros initially was released on a \$10,000 cash bond, but was remanded to custody on Feb. 21, 2012, after violating her conditions of release. Both will remain in detained pending their sentencing hearings, which have yet to be scheduled. At sentencing, Cisneros and Vigil each face a minimum five year and a maximum forty years of imprisonment.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Cisneros and Vigil went to trial on an indictment charging them with (1) conspiracy to possess marijuana with the intent to distribute, and (2) possession of marijuana with the intent to distribute. According to the evidence at trial, Vigil drove a Chevrolet Suburban belonging to Cisneros into the Santa Teresa Port of Entry at 1:43 p.m. on Jan. 27, 2012. Cisneros was a passenger in the Suburban. The two told agents that they had driven from Santa Fe to Palomas, Mexico, the day before so that Cisneros could have dental work. When asked why they did not return to Santa Fe through the Columbus Port of Entry, Vigil claimed he wanted to sightsee.

After being referred to the secondary inspection area at the port of entry, a narcotics detecting canine alerted to the cargo area of the Suburban. Agents lifted the carpet in the Suburban's cargo area and discovered 210 bundles of marijuana in a compartment under the floor.

Vigil, who testified at the trial, admitted during his testimony that he and Cisneros had not driven the Suburban to Palomas, but instead had taken a bus from Santa Fe to El Paso, Texas, where someone met them and drove them to Palomas where they later picked up the Suburban.

The case was investigated by United States Customs and Border Protection and Homeland Security Investigations, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Marisa Lizarraga and Andrea W. Hattan.

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