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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Release**

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**FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS OKLAHOMA COUPLE OF METHAMPHETAMINE  
TRAFFICKING, FIREARMS AND IMMIGRATION OFFENSES**

ALBUQUERQUE - In the late afternoon of Aug. 10, 2012, a federal jury convicted Rafael Goxcon-Chagal, 51, and Maria Vianey Medina-Copete, 36, both residents of Tulsa, Okla., of narcotics trafficking and firearms offenses after a five-day trial, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales. The jury also found Medina-Copete, a Mexican national, guilty of re-entering the United States without authorization after having previously been deported.

Goxcon-Chagal and Medina-Copete went to trial on a five-count superseding indictment that was filed on May 8, 2012, and charged the couple with (1) conspiracy to violate the federal narcotics trafficking laws; (2) with possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; and (3) using a firearm during a drug trafficking offense. The superseding indictment also charged Medina-Copete with (4) the unlawful possession of a firearm by an illegal alien; and (5) illegal re-entry by a removed alien.

The evidence at trial established that, on June 28, 2011, a New Mexico State Police officer executed a routine traffic stop of a vehicle bearing a Nevada license plate and driven by Goxcon-Chagal with Medina-Copete as a passenger on Interstate 40. When the officer made contact with Goxcon-Chagal, he observed that Goxcon-Chagal appeared to be unusually nervous. Although Goxcon-Chagal proffered an Oklahoma driver's license, he could not locate the registration and insurance information for the vehicle. When Medina-Copete managed to locate the vehicle information, the officer noted that the owner of the vehicle was a Julio Lopez with a Las Vegas, Nev., address, and that the vehicle had only recently been insured. While waiting for the vehicle information, the officer noted a strong chemical odor in the vehicle and observed multiple air fresheners in the car.

After obtaining conflicting information regarding their course of travel and the identity of the owner of the vehicle from Goxcon-Chagal and Medina-Copete, the officer asked Goxcon-Chagal if the couple were transporting drugs, weapons or other contraband in the vehicle. After Goxcon-Chagal denied that he was transporting any contraband, the officer requested and obtained consent from Goxcon-Chagal and Medina-Copete to search the vehicle. After a narcotics canine alerted to the front passenger side of the vehicle, the officer located a false compartment behind the passenger side airbag which contained two packages of white glass-like

substances which appeared to be methamphetamine. Chemical analysis later revealed that the packages contained more than a kilogram of methamphetamine.

Later, when a DEA agent searched a duffle bag that Medina-Copete identified as her property, he uncovered a Walther P99 pistol wrapped in a towel. When the agent asked about the pistol, Medina-Copete said that the pistol belonged to Goxcon-Chagal.

The evidence also established that Medina-Copete had previously been deported from the United States to Mexico at Otay Mesa, Calif., on Oct. 24, 2007. It further established that she re-entered the United States without authorization.

Both Goxcon-Chagal and Medina-Copete testified during the defense case. Each denied knowing that the methamphetamine was concealed in the vehicle. During his testimony, Goxcon-Chagal admitted that the pistol recovered from Medina-Copete's duffle bag belonged to him, but denied that he was using it to protect the methamphetamine.

The jury deliberated less than two hours before returning a guilty verdict on all counts of the superseding indictment.

At sentencing, Goxcon-Chagal and Medina-Copete each face a mandatory minimum of fifteen years of imprisonment and a maximum of life imprisonment. Goxcon-Chagal will be on supervised release for at least five years after he completes his prison sentence. Medina-Copete will be deported after she completes her term of imprisonment. Both have been in federal custody since they were arrested on criminal complaints on June 28, 2011. They remain detained pending their sentencing hearings, which have yet to be scheduled.

The case was investigated by the DEA and the New Mexico State Police, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jon K. Stanford and Raul Torrez.

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