



*Office of the United States Attorney  
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday, March 31, 2009

For Information Contact Public Affairs  
SANDY RAYNOR  
Telephone: (602) 514-7625  
Cell: (602) 525-2681

## **PAIR SENTENCED TO 21 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR MARIJUANA CONSPIRACY**

PHOENIX – Jose Vega-Avalos, 18, a citizen of Mexico residing in Chandler, Ariz., and Pedro Franco-Aguilar, 26, from Caborca, Sonora, Mexico, were sentenced on March 30<sup>th</sup> by U.S. District Judge Neil V. Wake to 21 months in federal prison followed by three years of supervised release. Both men pleaded guilty on January 6, 2009 to Conspiracy to Possess with the Intent to Distribute more than 50 kilograms of marijuana. Two additional co-defendants await sentencing.

On December 11, 2008, on a desert road near Stanfield, Ariz., U.S. Border Patrol agents stopped a vehicle driven by Vega-Avalos and found 10 bundles of marijuana with a combined weight of approximately 100 kilograms. The subsequent investigation led agents to a second vehicle that acted as a scout for Vega-Avalos and, ultimately, to a spot in the desert where the marijuana had been transported via backpackers and loaded into Vega-Avalos's car. Franco-Aguilar was one of the backpackers and was arrested at the scene. Vega-Avalos admitted that he was paid to help transport the marijuana to Casa Grande, Ariz. Franco-Aguilar stated that he was paid \$1,500 to walk the load of marijuana through the desert.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Drug Enforcement Administration. The prosecution was handled by James B. Morse Jr. Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR-09-0016  
RELEASE NUMBER: 2009-110(Vega-Avalos & Franco-Aguilar)

###

For more information on the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Arizona, visit <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/az/>