



# Department of Justice

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## **CO-DEFENDANTS SENTENCED FOR ROLES IN LARGE SCALE MARIJUANA OPERATION**

Orlando, Florida - U.S. Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announces that U.S. District Judge John Antoon, II today sentenced Carlos Alberto Hereu (39, Orlando) to six years in federal prison for federal narcotics charges resulting from a large scale marijuana grow operation. Hereu's co-defendant, Luis Antonio Gomez-Garcia (36, Mexico), was sentenced to 20 months in federal prison for his role in these offenses. Hereu and Gomez-Garcia were also ordered to pay over \$117,000.00 in restitution to Progress Energy, whose power was illegally diverted to fuel the enterprise.

According to court documents and testimony and information presented at the sentencing hearing, Hereu helped manage one of the largest marijuana grow operations known to the investigators in this case. Gomez-Garcia acted as a full time irrigation worker to manage the marijuana plants. In March 2011, agents executed a search warrant at a warehouse in South Orlando and found 1,455 marijuana plants actively being grown in the warehouse. The operation required the use of sophisticated wiring to illegally divert power from the power company, causing a loss to Progress Energy of more than \$117,000.00 over several months. Additionally, approximately 25 tons of air-conditioning resources and 100 high-powered lights were used to grow the marijuana.

In total, the amount of marijuana seized was estimated to be worth more than \$4 million, and the operation capable of producing up to \$16 million in marijuana per year. Investigators from the Drug Enforcement Administration and Progress Energy described the marijuana grow operation as the largest they were aware of in hundreds of investigations, and the first known operation to utilize commercial space.

This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney J. Bishop Ravenel.