



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
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News Release

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2 plead guilty to distributing cocaine

Two men from Phoenix, Ariz., pleaded guilty yesterday in federal court to distributing cocaine in Minnesota.

Enrique Estrada Araque, 53, and Rene Manual Sanchez, 47, each pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute 5 or more kilograms of cocaine. Both entered their pleas on Jan. 23 in Minneapolis before United States District Court Judge David Doty. Both men were indicted on Sept. 23, 2008.

According to their respective plea agreements, the two men and others formed an agreement to transport kilos of powder cocaine from Arizona to Minnesota beginning in September 2006 and continuing through March 2007. A co-conspirator, identified as "Individual A," agreed to move the cocaine from Arizona to Minnesota, where it would be received by another co-conspirator, identified as "Individual B," who would distribute it in Minnesota.

Araque admitted he traveled from Arizona to Minnesota four times between January and March 2007 and delivered respectively 2, 3, 3 and 4 kilograms of powder cocaine to Individual B. Araque agreed he caused the transportation of at least 5 but fewer than 15 kilograms of cocaine, and voluntarily engaged in the conspiracy.

Sanchez admitted he acted as a paid courier for Individual A, and he personally transported multiple kilograms of cocaine. He also admitted that in January 2007 he met Individual B at a Minnesota hotel while traveling with Individual A. Sanchez also admitted that in February 2007 he was paid \$3,000 to deliver a load of powder cocaine worth more than \$40,000.

In route to deliver the payment to Individual A in Arizona, Sanchez was stopped by police on Feb. 6, 2007, in Nebraska. Officers recovered \$47,050 in cash, a loaded .357-caliber handgun in Sanchez's waistband, a .357-caliber handgun in the vehicle's trunk, 51 rounds of .357 ammunition, a bullet-proof vest, three knives, brass knuckles and weighted fighting gloves.

Sanchez agreed that he caused the transportation of at least 5 but fewer than 15 kilograms of cocaine, and voluntarily engaged in the conspiracy.

Each defendant faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison with a mandatory minimum penalty of 10 years in prison. Judge Doty will determine the defendants' sentences at a future date. This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Nebraska State Patrol; the Paul Bunyan Drug Task Force and the Safe Trails Task Force. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lisa D. Kirkpatrick and Steven L. Schleicher.