

For Immediate Release
April 14, 2011

**LONG-HAUL TRUCK DRIVER FROM DETROIT PLEADS
GUILTY TO FEDERAL MARIJUANA CHARGE**

LAS CRUCES – Yesterday in federal court in Las Cruces, **Vernon Earl Coleman**, 46, pled guilty to possession of marijuana with the intent to distribute. Coleman, a resident of Detroit, Michigan, has been in federal custody since his arrest on April 2, 2010, and will remain detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that the charge against Coleman arose out of conduct occurring on April 2, 2010, in Hidalgo County, New Mexico. According to a criminal complaint filed in the case, Coleman drove his tractor-trailer into the New Mexico Motor and Transportation Division Port of Entry on I-10 west of Lordsburg. During a routine safety inspection of the tractor trailer, officers found duffle bags containing 759 pounds of marijuana between the pallets inside the trailer.

The penalty for the offense includes a five-year mandatory minimum prison sentence and a four-year term of supervised release. Coleman could receive a sentence of up to 40 years in prison for the offense.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the New Mexico Motor and Transportation Division, and New Mexico State Police, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jacob A. Wishard and Michael Nammar.

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