

For Immediate Release
June 14, 2011

**WEST AFRICAN MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL
MARIJUANA TRAFFICKING OFFENSE**

ALBUQUERQUE – Today in federal court in Albuquerque, **Raymond Tounkara**, 48, pled guilty to possession of marijuana with the intent to distribute under a plea agreement with the United States Attorney's Office. At sentencing Tounkara faces a minimum of five-years and a maximum of forty-years of imprisonment. Tounkara is a citizen of Guinea in West Africa who was residing in Atlanta, Georgia, when he was arrested on April 2, 2011. He will be deported after completing his prison sentence. Tounkara has been in federal custody since his arrest and remains detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Tounkara was arrested after law enforcement officers found 663 pounds of marijuana concealed in Tounkara's tractor- trailer during a routine inspection at the Gallup Port of Entry (Gallup POE). Tounkara was charged with possession of more than 100 kilograms of marijuana with intent to distribute in a criminal complaint filed on April 4, 2011, and was indicted on that same charge on April 26, 2011.

According to the criminal complaint, shortly after noon on April 2, 2011, an officer of the New Mexico Motor Transportation Police Division, New Mexico Department of Public Safety Department, who was conducting an inspections on commercial vehicles at the Gallup POE, inspected a tractor-trailer driven by Tounkara. The officer's inspection revealed that Tounkara's logbook failed to note miles driven and had no bill of lading information. Based on the violations in the logbook, the officer conducted a visual inspection of Tounkara's tractor-trailer and determined that the trailer's interior had been modified and that its internal measurements were smaller than the external measurements. After obtaining Tounkara's consent to search the

trailer, officers discovered a concealed compartment in the front wall of the trailer that contained 663 pounds of marijuana. Thereafter, Tounkara admitted that he transporting the marijuana from Phoenix, Arizona to Atlanta, Georgia.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the New Mexico Motor Transportation Police Division, New Mexico Department of Public Safety Department, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Shammara Henderson.

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