

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney
Laura E. Duffy***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - December 15, 2011

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced today that Yoahjan Lara Flores, Arturo Lara, and Alfredo Rubio Lara were each sentenced to serve 60 months in prison following their convictions for conspiracy to possess an unregistered firearm, in violation of Title 26, United States Code, Section 5861(d). The defendants entered their guilty pleas on March 18, 2011.

According to court documents, the defendants attempted to purchase multiple M-203 “grenade” launchers, multiple high explosive 40 millimeter cartridge ammunition, and an M-4 rifle. Court documents allege the defendants repeatedly met with undercover law enforcement agents in El Centro, California, to negotiate the purchase of one or more of the M-203 launchers and ammunition.

As a legal issue of nationwide first impression, Judge Hayes applied a significant +15 “missile” federal sentencing guidelines adjustment to possession of the M-203 “grenade” launcher weapon system through application of the National Firearms Act. Court documents note that the M-203 weapon system is

a particularly destructive personal artillery device, increasingly favored by militarized narcotics trafficking organizations along the United States' southern border.

During today's hearing, Judge Hayes emphasized the inherent dangerousness of the M-203 weapon system and the dangers that the defendants' trafficking efforts posed to the peoples of the United States and Mexico.

United States Attorney Duffy said, "Judge Hayes' seminal decision will make the citizens of the United States and Mexico safer. It also puts arms and drug traffickers on notice, if you are convicted of purchasing a "grenade" launcher, you will serve a lengthy prison sentence."

"ATF's involvement in perfecting this criminal investigation is a prime example of the successful use of federal laws to confront, engage, and eliminate dangerous criminal activity," says John A. Torres, Special Agent in Charge ATF Los Angeles Field Division. "The criminals involved in this case rolled the dice against the law, lost, and received the maximum sentence for their crimes."

United States Attorney Duffy commended the outstanding work of the agents and officers from the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives - Imperial County Office and California Department of Justice - Bureau of Firearms.

The defendants were arrested on September 29, 2010, by agents of the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives El Centro Office and assisted by agents and officers from the California Department of Justice - Bureau of Firearms, the Calexico Police Department, the California Highway Patrol, the El Centro Police Department and the Imperial County Sheriff's Department.

DEFENDANTS

Criminal Case No. 10cr4083

Yoahjan Lara Flores
Arturo Lara
Alfredo Rubio Lara

SUMMARY OF CHARGES IN PLEA

Title 18, United States Code, Section 371 and Title 26, United States Code, Sections 5861(d) and 5871, Conspiracy to Possess an Unregistered Firearm

PARTICIPATING AGENCIES

Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives - El Centro Office

California Department of Justice - Bureau of Firearms

Calexico Police Department

California Highway Patrol

El Centro Police Department

Imperial County Sheriff's Department