



U.S. Department of Justice

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FOUR MEN CHARGED WITH FEDERAL DRUG AND GUN CHARGES

ROCKFORD -- PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; JOHN J. RILEY, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration; HIRAM GRAU, Director of the Illinois State Police; HENRY S. DIXON, Lee County State's Attorney; and JOHN R. VARGA, Lee County Sheriff, today announced:

A federal grand jury in Rockford yesterday returned an indictment charging **SHANNON L. GREGORY**, 39, and **DONALD P. CIPRA**, 27, both of Paw Paw, Illinois, **ERIC M. KONRADY**, 25, of Naperville, Illinois, and **BENJAMIN F. GARCIA**, 25, of Aurora, Illinois, each with conspiring to manufacture 100 or more marijuana plants, as well as possessing a firearm in furtherance of the drug conspiracy. The four men were arrested in Lee County on March 26, 2011, and initially charged in state court. All four defendants are scheduled to appear before United States Magistrate Judge P. Michael Mahoney on April 27, 2011, at 11:15 a.m.

Each defendant faces a possible sentence of at least 5 years and up to 40 years of imprisonment on the drug conspiracy charge, and a mandatory minimum penalty of at least 5 years imprisonment on the gun charge, which must be ordered to run consecutively. In addition, each defendant faces a term of supervised release of at least 5 years following release from prison, as well as a fine of up to \$2,000,000. If convicted, each defendant's actual sentence would be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the federal Sentencing Guidelines.

The case was investigated by the Rockford Resident Agency of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Chicago Field Office and the Illinois State Police Blackhawk Area Task Force (a task force led by the Illinois State Police, including the Whiteside County Sheriff's Department, Henry County Sheriff's Department, and Sterling Police Department), with the assistance of the Lee County Sheriff's Department. The case is being prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney MARK T. KARNER.

Members of the public are reminded that an indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. Each defendant is entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving the guilt of each defendant beyond a reasonable doubt.

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