



**United States Department of Justice  
United States Attorney's Office  
District of Minnesota**

**B. Todd Jones,  
United States Attorney**

**Jeanne F. Cooney  
Director of Community Relations  
(612) 664-5611  
email: [jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov](mailto:jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov)**

# **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday, January 25, 2011  
[WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN](http://WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN)

## **Medford man sentenced for smuggling firearms**

Earlier today in Minneapolis, Paul Giovanni D. La Rosa, age 37, of Medford, was sentenced to 36 months in federal prison after earlier admitting he had illegally purchased more than 100 firearms, which he then smuggled into Mexico. Some of those weapons were later recovered during investigations into Mexican drug cartels.

In imposing the sentence, United States District Court Judge Ann D. Montgomery said of De La Rosa's actions, "This was not a momentary lapse of judgment. You were living a lie for a long time..." She went on to say, "The seriousness of this crime cannot be overstated." De La Rosa was indicted on December 16, 2009, and subsequently pleaded guilty to one count of making false statements on a firearms application.

After today's sentencing, U.S. Attorney B. Todd Jones, said "According to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, approximately 90 percent of all illegal guns seized in Mexico can be traced back to the United States. Those guns are fueling much of the violence associated with the Mexican drug cartels. As a result, we will vigorously prosecute anyone who illegally purchases guns here, intending to smuggle them across the border. We must do our best to halt the 'iron river' of guns flowing south, and this prosecution is a prime example of how we can make that happen."

In his plea agreement, De La Rosa admitted that on November 11, 2009, while buying two handguns from a licensed firearms dealer in Albert Lea, Minnesota, he made false statements on the required firearms application. Specifically, he claimed to be the actual buyer of the firearms, when, in fact, he was making the purchase for individuals in Mexico. De La Rosa later admitted he had been conducting similar "straw purchases" of firearms since 2007. In fact, from 2007 through November 16, 2009, he purchased more than 100 firearms.

De La Rosa also admitted that after buying the weapons, he routinely smuggled them into Mexico. Between 2007 and November 16, 2009, he crossed the U.S.-Mexican border 20 times for that purpose. During that time period, he received approximately \$70,000, via wire transfers,

to pay for the weapons.

De La Rosa was arrested on November 16 in Laredo, Texas, while attempting to re-enter the United States. During an inspection of his vehicle, border authorities found 14 firearms, along with ammunition and \$10,000 in cash, hidden in a sofa in the back of his mini van.

Following De La Rosa's sentencing, Michael Feinberg, Special Agent in Charge of the St. Paul Office of Homeland Security-Investigations, said, "This investigation exemplifies the partnership that exists between the investigative agencies involved in the case. We are committed to aggressively pursuing counter proliferation investigations involving the illegal export of strategic and controlled commodities."

Bernard J. Zapor, Special Agent in Charge of the St. Paul Field Office of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF"), added, "The source of drug cartel violence is in the heart of those who slaughter others for their contraband-based economy. The tools of that violence are provided by gun runners looking to profit from this sociopathic culture."

This case was the result of an investigation by Homeland Security-Investigations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation Division and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lisa D. Kirkpatrick and Steven L. Schleicher.

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