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DRUG SMUGGLER CONVICTED AT TRIAL

PHILADELPHIA - Hector Hugo Tovar-Sanchez, 25, of Cleveland, Ohio, was convicted last night by a federal jury of a drug conspiracy that involved smuggling cocaine into the U.S. from Mexico, announced United States Attorney Zane David Memeger. The jury, seated in front of U.S. District Court Judge James Knoll Gardner in Allentown, PA, convicted Tovar-Sanchez, a legal permanent resident of the United States and a citizen of Mexico, of four counts including conspiracy to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine, two counts of distribution of 500 grams or more of cocaine, and one count of distribution of cocaine. Tovar-Sanchez and his co-conspirators were responsible for bringing approximately 17 kilograms of cocaine and approximately 1,000 pounds of marijuana into the Allentown, PA area. Additionally, evidence was introduced that Tovar-Sanchez was responsible for supplying an additional 50 kilograms of cocaine to distributors in North Carolina and Delaware. The investigation revealed that the narcotics were being smuggling into the United States from Mexico before being passed along to defendants in San Antonio and Houston, TX. One of the co-defendants in this case was told that if his drug debts rose any greater, he would be taken to Mexico to answer to the bosses. The drugs were transported in U-haul trucks, tractor-trailors, and cars with secret compartments.

Tovar also faces federal marijuana charges in Texas, along with a charge related to the discovery of a sawed-off shotgun in his home in Cleveland, Ohio at the time of his arrest.

Sentencing is scheduled for June 15, 2011. The defendant faces a maximum possible sentence of life in prison.

This case was investigated by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations with assistance from the Pennsylvania State Police, the Allentown Police Department, and the Drug Enforcement Administration. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Maria M. Carrillo.

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