



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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**FIRST DEFENDANT SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON
IN COLUMBUS, NEW MEXICO FIREARMS TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATION**

United States Attorney Robert Pitman announced that in Las Cruces, NM, yesterday, a federal judge sentenced 27-year-old Vicente Carreon to 46 months in federal prison for his role in a firearms trafficking operation.

In addition to the prison term, United States District Judge David C. Brack ordered that Carreon be placed under supervised release for a period of three years after completing his prison term.

On July 22, 2011, Carreon pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy and one count of smuggling firearms from the United States. By pleading guilty, Carreon admitted that between January and February 2011, he assisted in the smuggling into Mexico of at least thirty (30) 9mm pistols straw purchased from Chaparral Guns in Chaparral, NM. Statements in court as well as overt acts alleged in the indictment reveal that Carreon assisted in the operation by removing serial numbers as well as UPC codes from firearms boxes; purchasing a backpack used in transporting the firearms; and transporting the firearms to a stash house in El Paso.

Carreon is the first of 12 convicted defendants, which include former Village of Columbus (NM) Police Chief Angelo Vega, former Village of Columbus Trustee Blaz Gutierrez, and former Village of Columbus mayor Eddie Espinoza, to be sentenced in this case. No other sentencing dates have been scheduled.

The investigation was conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) with assistance from the Comandante Chihuahua State Police in Palomas, Mexico and the Secretariat of Public Security in Juarez, Mexico. The U.S. Marshal's Service, U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, New Mexico State Police, Las Cruces Police Department, El Paso Police Department as well as other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies also provided assistance during the investigation. The case is being prosecuted by District of New Mexico Assistant United States Attorney Nathan Lichvarcik as well as Western District of Texas Assistant United States Attorneys Greg McDonald and Steve Spitzer.

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