

For Immediate Release
May 16, 2011

EL PASO MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL MARIJUANA CHARGE

LAS CRUCES – Earlier today in federal court in Las Cruces, **Alden Jeffrey Heaton**, 52, pled guilty to possession of more than 100 kilograms of marijuana with the intent to distribute. At sentencing, Heaton faces a minimum of five-years and a maximum of forty-years of imprisonment, followed by four years of supervised release. Heaton, a resident of El Paso, Texas, was arrested on June 12, 2010, and was released on a \$10,000 unsecured bond pending his sentencing hearing. He will remain out of custody pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that the charge arose out of conduct occurring at the United States Border Patrol checkpoint on I-25 in Doña Ana County, New Mexico. During his plea hearing, Heaton admitted that on June 12, 2010, he was stopped at the Border Patrol checkpoint with 152 kilograms of marijuana concealed in the truck he was driving. The criminal complaint alleged that, after a drug detecting canine alerted to the truck, agents found an after-market compartment within the bed. Inside the compartment, agents found 306 bundles of marijuana.

The case was investigated by the United States Border Patrol and the Drug Enforcement Administration, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jessica Cárdenas Jarvis.

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