



PRESS RELEASE

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11th MEMBER OF DRUG CONSPIRACY SENTENCED TO FIVE YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON

Madison, Wisconsin -- Erik C. Peterson, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Otoniel Mendoza, 32, a citizen of Mexico, was sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Barbara B. Crabb to five years in prison for conspiring to possess cocaine with intent to distribute. Mendoza will be deported to Mexico after he completes his prison sentence.

Between May 2007 and June 2008, Mendoza was involved in a conspiracy to possess and to distribute cocaine in Watertown. Ten individuals have been previously sentenced to prison in the case. Three defendants, Efrain Pineda-Buenventura, Gerardo Pineda-Soria, and Juan Carlos Pineda-Pineda are scheduled to be sentenced in April for their role, and three other defendants remain fugitives.

Beginning in February 2008, the United States received authority from Chief Judge Crabb to conduct wiretaps on several of the telephones being used by Mendoza's co-defendants to conduct their drug operation. Approximately 8,000 calls were intercepted by law enforcement officers in which Mendoza and his co-defendants were

monitored conducting drug transactions in Watertown and in Dodge County.

On June 19, 2008, law enforcement officers executed 11 search warrants in the Western and Eastern Districts of Wisconsin, resulting in the arrest of Mendoza and his co-defendants, the seizure of over \$100,000 in United States currency, several automobiles, and multiple kilograms of cocaine.

The charge against the defendant was the result of an investigation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration; Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigations; Dodge County Sheriff's Department; Jefferson County Drug Task Force; Fort Atkinson Police Department; Watertown Police Department; and Janesville Police Department. The prosecution of the case has been handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul W. Connell.

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