



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates
Northern District of Georgia

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CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

DEFENDANTS PLEAD GUILTY TO CONSPIRING TO SEND FIREARMS TO MEXICO

Defendants Planned to Transport 8-10 Assault Rifles Across Border

ATLANTA, GA -- DARIO RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ, 28, of Doraville, Georgia and MANUEL GAMEZ-VALENZUELA, 46, of Atlanta, Georgia, have pleaded guilty in federal district court to conspiring to transport semi-automatic assault rifles to Mexico. RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ also pleaded guilty to being illegal aliens in possession of firearms. A co-defendant in the same case, DANIEL BERNAL-PEREZ, 35, of Doraville, Georgia, has pleaded guilty to being an illegal alien in possession of firearms.

“These defendants acquired semi-automatic assault rifles with the intent to transport them to Mexico where they would have undoubtedly ended up in the hands of members of the extremely violent drug cartels that operate there,” said United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates. “Our federal law enforcement partners are committed to find and investigate the trail of guns and violence that runs from Georgia to Mexico and back.”

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: Federal agents learned from a confidential source that BERNAL-PEREZ, acting on behalf of GAMEZ-VALENZUELA, was attempting to acquire eight to ten semi-automatic firearms to send to Mexico. On January 30, 2010, agents learned from a confidential source that RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ was going to bring firearms to BERNAL-PEREZ's residence in Doraville, Georgia the next day. On January 31, 2010, agents established surveillance on BERNAL-PEREZ's residence. They observed RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ arrive at the residence in a Jeep Cherokee. He was met by BERNAL-PEREZ. A few minutes later GAMEZ-VALENZUELA arrived. The three defendants conversed in the driveway for a short time then went to the Jeep Cherokee and looked at the contents of a long box inside the vehicle. Then agents observed BERNAL-PEREZ and GAMEZ-VALENZUELA go inside the residence. RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ took a long box out of the Cherokee and carried it into the residence. The agents could tell from the way in which RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ carried the box that the box contained heavy items which the agents suspected to be firearms.

A few minutes later, the agents watched RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ leave the residence carrying the same long box, however, the agents could tell that the box was now empty. BERNAL-PEREZ and GAMEZ-VALENZUELA later left together. The agents obtained and executed a search warrant at the residence. Inside they found three Norinco, model SKS, 7.62 X 39mm rifles and one Olympic Arms, model MFR, .223 caliber rifle hidden in a closet. All four rifles are semi-automatic assault rifles that had large capacity magazines attached to them.

BERNAL-PEREZ and RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ were arrested at the residence on January 31, 2010. GAMEZ-VALENZUELA was arrested near Montgomery, Alabama on May 3, 2010.

The indictment was returned by a federal grand jury on March 9, 2010. In the indictment BERNAL-PEREZ, RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ and GAMEZ-VALENZUELA are charged with one count of conspiring to traffic illegally in firearms. BERNAL-PEREZ and RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ are also each charged with one count of being an illegal alien in possession of firearms.

On January 7, 2011, RODRIGUEZ-GOMEZ pleaded guilty to both counts brought against him. He could receive a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000. Also on January 7, 2011, GAMEZ-VALENZUELA pleaded guilty to the conspiracy count. He could receive a maximum sentence of 5 years incarceration and be fined up to \$250,000. On January 19, 2011, BERNAL-PEREZ pleaded guilty to being an illegal alien in possession of firearms. He could receive a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. In determining the actual sentences, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

Sentencing hearings for all three defendants are scheduled for Thursday, March 17, 2011, beginning at 2:00 p.m., before United States District Judge Charles A. Pannell, Jr.

This case was investigated by Special Agents and Task Force Agents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the Drug Enforcement Administration with assistance from Special Agents of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Assistant United States Attorney William L. McKinnon, Jr. is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet

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