

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA***

***San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Carol C. Lam***

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***For Immediate Release***

### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - August 30, 2004

United States Attorney Carol C. Lam today announced that Roberto Armenta-Orozco was today sentenced by the Honorable M. James Lorenz to 121 months in custody, followed by three years of supervised release, on drug trafficking charges. On May 28, 2004, a federal jury convicted Armenta-Orozco of conspiracy to distribute marijuana, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, and importation of marijuana.

The charges of which defendant was found guilty arise from events that occurred on April 14, 2003. On that day, defendant Armenta-Orozco drove his tractor-trailer, containing approximately 6,753 pounds of marijuana, into the United States through the Otay Mesa Commercial Port of Entry. The evidence at trial established that he was driving a 1975 Freightliner tractor hauling a trailer containing the marijuana mixed with approximately 30,000 pounds of frozen squid which was ultimately destined for South Korea. His manifest claimed that he was transporting approximately 35,000 pounds of frozen squid. A random canine search of the cargo facility was conducted and a narcotic detector dog alerted to the presence of a drug emanating from Armenta's trailer. The inspectors at the Port of Entry immediately notified the Special

Agents with the Immigration and Customs Enforcement to set up surveillance to follow Armenta, who did not know about the canine alert to the marijuana in the trailer. After stopping at four locations in Otay Mesa, Armenta-Orozco dropped off the trailer containing the marijuana and frozen squid at a nearby truck stop, where several coconspirators, including Jaime Palencia-Coria, Sylvestre Palencia-Coria, Adrian Castillas-Delgado, Arturo Castillas-Delgado, and Rafael Yee Gonzalez, attempted to off-load the marijuana before the container left for South Korea. Jaime Palencia-Coria, Sylvestre Palencia-Coria, Adrian Castillas-Delgado, Arturo Castillas-Delgado, and Rafael Yee Gonzalez, were arrested at the truck stop as they attempted to switch the packages of marijuana, with packages of frozen squid from a second truck. Defendant Armento-Orozco was arrested after a more intensive investigation revealed his involvement.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Sherri Walker Hobson, who prosecuted the case, codefendants Jaime Palencia-Coria, Sylvestre Palencia-Coria, Adrian Castillas-Delgado, Arturo Castillas-Delgado, and Rafael Yee Gonzalez, pled guilty to possession of marijuana with intent to distribute prior to the trial. Rafael Yee Gonzalez, the driver of the second tractor trailer transporting the missing squid from the first trailer, was sentenced to 120 months in custody on July 28, 2004. Four off-loaders, who were in the process of switching the bags of squid and the marijuana, Jaime Palencia-Coria, Sylvestre Palencia-Coria, Adrian Castillas-Delgado, and Arturo Castillas-Delgado, were sentenced from 30 months to 41 months in custody.

This case was investigated by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

**DEFENDANT** Roberto Armenta-Orozco

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Title 21, United States Code, Section 846 and 841 – Conspiracy to distribute marijuana  
Title 21, United States Code, Section 841 – Possession of marijuana with intent to distribute  
Title 21, United States Code, Sections 960 and 962 – Importation of marijuana  
Maximum penalty per count: mandatory minimum term of 10 years to life in custody;  
fine of \$4,000,000; five years of supervised release.

**AGENCY** Immigration and Customs Enforcement