

PRESS RELEASE

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MAN SENTENCED TO 37 MONTHS FOR ROLE IN DRUG CONSPIRACY

Madison, Wisconsin -- Erik C. Peterson, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Arturo Pineda-Lopez, 25, a citizen of Mexico, was sentenced today by Chief U.S. District Judge Barbara B. Crabb to 37 months in federal prison for conspiracy to possess cocaine with intent to distribute. Pineda-Lopez will be deported to Mexico after he completes his prison sentence.

Between May 2007 and June 2008, the defendant was involved in a conspiracy with numerous other individuals in which they conspired to possess cocaine with intent to distribute in the Watertown area. Four of Pineda-Lopez's co-defendants - Teodulo Pineda-Buenventura, Juan Carlos Pineda Pineda, Eli Torres-Banos, and Otoniel Mendoza - have pleaded guilty and have been sentenced to prison or are scheduled to be sentenced in March. One of Pineda-Lopez's co-defendants - Angel Ayala-Pineda - remains a fugitive. The last co-defendant - Gerardo Pineda-Soria - is scheduled for trial on March 30, 2009.

Beginning in February 2008, the United States received authority from Chief

Judge Crabb to conduct wiretaps on several of the telephones being used by Pineda-Lopez and his co-defendants to conduct the drug operation. Approximately 8,000 calls were monitored by law enforcement officers in which the defendants were overheard conducting drug transactions.

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

The charges against Pineda-Lopez were 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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