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October 15, 2004

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OCT 15 -- (McALLEN, TX) United States Attorney Michael Shelby announced that Humberto T. Garcia, 26, of Roma, Texas, will be serving a total of 30 years in federal prison without parole as punishment for his leadership role in a drug distribution and money laundering organization based in Starr County, Texas. Garcia was convicted of seven federal offenses in July 2004 by a McAllen jury following a three day trial – a marijuana trafficking conspiracy and two substantive drug trafficking counts and four money laundering charges.

Today at a hearing held in federal court in McAllen, Texas, United States District Judge Randy Crane imposed the 30-year sentence for each of three drug trafficking convictions – conspiracy and aiding and abetting the delivery of two separate loads of marijuana totaling more than 1100 kilograms in 2001. The sentences will be served concurrently. During the three-day trial, the United States proved that Garcia was the leader and organizer of a drug distribution organization based in Starr County, Texas, responsible for overseeing the transport of over 8,000 kilograms of marijuana from Starr County to Houston, Texas. Garcia hired drivers to transport drug loads, and at times drove “follow” vehicle behind the load vehicles. Garcia also instructed drivers how to circumvent the checkpoint in Hebbronville, Texas, by traveling through area ranches. Garcia provided the load drivers with bolt cutters to cut through a rancher's gate locks or keys to locks he [Garcia] had surreptitiously installed on a rancher's gates.

The two substantive drug convictions – aiding and abetting the delivery of two loads of marijuana – included the delivery of 446 kilograms (986 pounds) and of 338 kilograms of marijuana (744 pounds) in 2001. Both loads were seized by law enforcement officials. Garcia provided the delivery vehicle and driver for these loads which were bound for Houston, Texas.

Garcia was also sentenced today to the maximum statutory penalty for each of four counts of conviction involving the laundering of proceeds from his drug trafficking activity. Garcia will serve 20 years on three of the money laundering convictions and 10 years on the fourth. These sentences will also be served concurrently with one another and with the 30 years sentenced imposed on the drug trafficking convictions. The money laundering convictions were the result of evidence that proved Garcia laundered more than \$100,000 generated by the sale of marijuana between 2001 to 2003. The evidence proved Garcia made down payments on eight different vehicles and paid a \$20,000 down payment on a home in 2003 with the money generated from his drug trafficking activity. Today, the court ordered that Garcia must forfeit his interest in the home, several vehicles and other assets.

This case was investigated by agents and officers of the McAllen, Texas office of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, the Texas Department of Public Safety, Jim Hogg Sheriff's Department, and United States Border Patrol. This case was successfully prosecuted by Assistant U. S. Attorneys James Sturgis and Alex Lewis.