



# Department of Justice

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**TWO MEN SENTENCED TO 10 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON  
FOR MARIJUANA GROW IN THE  
CHEQUAMEGON-NICOLET NATIONAL FOREST**

Madison, Wis. - John W. Vaudreuil, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Jose Esqueda-Garcia, 19, and Moises Lopez-Ontiveros, 21, both citizens of Mexico, were each sentenced today by U.S. District Judge Barbara B. Crabb to 10 years in federal prison for their involvement in a conspiracy to manufacture marijuana in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest during 2011. Both men pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge in November 2011.

The evidence summarized by the government at the plea hearings established that Esqueda-Garcia and Moises Lopez-Ontiveros were apprehended in August 2011, along with Cesar Tinoco, 21, Abraham Ramirez, 29, and Jorge Lopez-Ontiveros, 25, all citizens of Mexico, and Norberto Burciaga, 40, of St. Paul, Minn., after the marijuana grow they tended in the forest was raided by more than 200 law enforcement officers from over a dozen local, state and federal agencies.

The grow location was initially discovered in November 2010 by hunters who reported the find to U.S. Forest Service officers. Police monitored the area in 2011 to determine if persons involved in the grow would return to use the area again. After months of monitoring and surveillance, law enforcement officers raided the campsite used by the growers, and seized over 9,400 marijuana plants that had been planted, fertilized and watered by the men.

Initially, four of the five men at the camp eluded capture until the following day when Burciaga arrived from Minnesota to pick them up. Sawyer County deputies saw Burciaga's truck, which investigators recognized based on their surveillance over the summer, and stopped it as it headed toward Minnesota, apprehending Burciaga and the four suspects who had fled and stayed in the forest overnight.

Tinoco, Ramirez and Jorge Lopez-Ontiveros each were sentenced last week to 10 years in prison. Burciaga will be sentenced within the next few weeks.

The charges against the defendants were the result of an investigation by the Wisconsin Department of Justice - Division of Criminal Investigation; Ashland County Sheriff's Department; Drug Enforcement Administration; U.S. Forest Service; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; Northwest Area Crime Unit (comprised of Sawyer, Douglas and Washburn County Sheriffs' Departments and Superior Police Department); U.S. Customs and Border Protection; and Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission. The prosecution of the case has been handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert A. Anderson.

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