

OFFICE OF THE PROSECUTOR

COUNTY OF WARREN

413 Second Street, Belvidere, New Jersey 07823
Phone: (908) 475-6275; Fax: (908) 475-6344

JAMES L. PFEIFFER
COUNTY PROSECUTOR

ANTHONY J. ROBINSON
First Assistant Prosecutor
KEVIN R. BROTZMAN
Chief Assistant Prosecutor
WENDY H. RILEY
Manager



BRENTON S. WARNE
Chief of Detectives
MELISSA A. FEHR
Deputy Chief of Detectives
COLONEL PATRICK J. CALLAHAN
*Superintendent of the
New Jersey State Police*

PRESS RELEASE

CHARGED:	Ruben V. Rodriguez 172 Ave Sierra de Tepehuanas Hermasillo, MX DOB: 01/05/1971	Jose Santa Cruz Cheno 906 Mariano Jimenex Hermasillo, MX DOB: 06/05/1964
-----------------	--	--

On March 12, 2024, the New Jersey State Police Mobile Safe Freight Unit conducted a commercial vehicle inspection of a tractor trailer at the Greenwich Township Weigh Station in Warren County. The shipping manifest reflected a shipment of oranges and no other products. A visual inspection of the cargo revealed pallets of oranges and twelve (12) additional pallets of cardboard boxes. The boxes were not labeled and were inconsistent with the packaging used for the oranges. Per industry standards the cardboard boxes are considered dry goods not produce. Officers obtained a consent to search from the driver and co-driver, Ruben V. Rodriguez, 53, and Jose Santa Cruz Cheno, 59, of Hermasillo, Mexico. Both men were properly documented and legally in the country.

As a result of the search, approximately 3.2 tons or 6,224 pounds of hydroponic marijuana, forty (40) pounds of Delta 9A powder (a cannabis concentrate) and five thousand and seventeen (5,017) individual packages of cannabis products were discovered in the cargo hold. The total weight for all of the products is 3.4 tons or 6,485 pounds. The street value of the seized product is approximately \$28,368,000.00. The investigation revealed that the vehicle was traveling from Dinuba, California to Long Island City, New York.

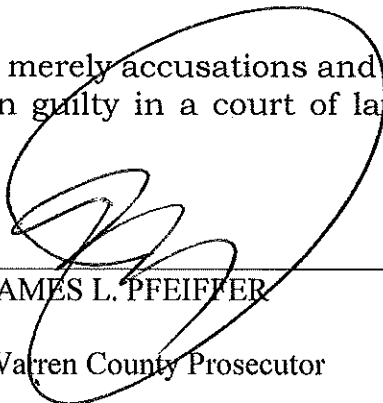
Both men was charged with the following and held at the Warren County Jail pending further proceedings:

- I. Possession with Intent to Distribute Marijuana, First Degree, 2C:35-5(b)10(a)
- II. Possession of Marijuana, Fourth Degree, 2C:35-10(b)
- III. Conspiracy to Distribute Marijuana, Second Degree, 2C:5-2

First Degree offenses carry a maximum potential sentence of 20 years in New Jersey State Prison, Second Degree offenses carry a maximum potential penalty of 10 years in New Jersey State Prison, and Third Degree offenses carry a maximum potential sentence of 5 years in New Jersey State Prison.

A detention hearing was held on March 21, 2024 before the Hon. Matthew Curry and both men have been detained pending trial.

Please be advised that the charges are merely accusations and that the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law beyond a reasonable doubt.

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval. The signature is written over a horizontal line.

JAMES L. PFEIFFER

Warren County Prosecutor

Approved by:

Date: March 13, 2024