



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

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**ORLANDO COUPLE CONVICTED OF FALSIFYING EVIDENCE
DURING A FEDERAL FIREARMS INVESTIGATION**

ORLANDO, FL - A jury in U.S. District Court in Orlando today found ERIC VLADIMIL LEBRON, 26, and his wife, ZAHIRA VARGAS-RODRIGUEZ, 26, guilty of Destruction, Alteration and Falsification of Records in a Federal Investigation. The maximum penalty LEBRON and VARGAS-RODRIGUEZ face is 20 years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. The sentencing hearing is scheduled for October 21, 2004.

LEBRON and VARGAS-RODRIGUEZ were indicted June 23, 2004 in a five-count indictment which also charged LEBRON with four additional counts of Making a False Statement with Regard to Information Required to Be Kept by a Federal Firearms Licensee. LEBRON was acquitted of these remaining counts.

According to the evidence presented at trial, LEBRON and VARGAS-RODRIGUEZ falsified daycare applications and attendance records in an attempt to establish that they had been living in Florida at the time that LEBRON had purchased eleven handguns. LEBRON then provided the false documents to federal agents investigating his firearms

purchases. LEBRON and VARGAS-RODRIGUEZ also had asked the owner of the daycare to provide false testimony regarding their Florida residency on their behalf.

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF"). It is another case prosecuted as a part the Department of Justice program "Project Safe Neighborhoods" - a nationwide gun violence reduction initiative with strong support from ATF. United States Attorney Paul I. Perez is coordinating the cooperative effort here in the Middle District of Florida with federal, state and local law enforcement officials and calling our effort "Project Safe Neighborhoods - Operation HALT the Violence!" The objective is to reduce violent crime by locating and seizing unlawfully possessed guns and then swiftly prosecuting the offenders using both federal and state gun laws.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Robert E. Bodnar, Jr., and Tanya Davis Wilson.