

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two men charged with trafficking methamphetamine – one pleads guilty, other found guilty by jury
State vs. Saul Rivas-Garcia and Maximiliano Bernardo

May 27, 2021 – District Attorney Shannon Wallace announces that Maximiliano Bernardo, 35, and Saul Rivas-Garcia, 43, have been sentenced to prison for trafficking methamphetamine.

The two men were arrested in January 2020, when a Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad (CMANS) investigation revealed possible drug activity at two homes, one on Highway 92 and the other on nearby Quail Run, both in unincorporated Woodstock.

After executing a search warrant at those addresses, CMANS and the Cherokee Sheriff's Office located 261 grams of methamphetamine and arrested Rivas-Garcia and Bernardo, charging them with trafficking a schedule II controlled substance.

"Our local law enforcement officers successfully identified suspicious drug activity, investigated, and made these arrests, ensuring that a very large quantity of methamphetamine would not find its way into our community," said Deputy Chief Assistant District Attorney Randall Ivey, who prosecuted the case on behalf of the State.

Bernardo entered a negotiated guilty plea on April 15, 2021, and received a sentence of 18 years to serve in confinement in the state penitentiary along with a mandatory fine of \$300,000. Rivas-Garcia requested a jury trial.

On April 26-27, 2021, the State presented Rivas-Garcia's case to a Cherokee County jury. During the trial, seven witnesses testified and the State presented evidence including numerous photos of drugs found in one of the homes. On April 27, the jury deliberated for about three hours before delivering a unanimous guilty verdict.

During an in-person sentencing hearing on May 20, 2021, Chief Superior Court Judge Ellen McEyes sentenced Rivas-Garcia to 15 years to serve in confinement in the state penitentiary along with a mandatory fine of \$300,000.

"Dangerous drugs like methamphetamine tragically affect the lives of not only individuals who become addicted but also family members of drug users, many of whom are children," said District Attorney Shannon Wallace. "The biggest travesty is when drugs destroy the lives of these innocent victims. By sentencing known drug traffickers, we can reduce drug activity in our county and protect our citizens."

The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.