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MERCED JURY CONVICTS TWO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MEN OF DRUG TRAFFICKING

A Merced County jury convicted two men Southern California men on Thursday of transporting two pounds of methamphetamine with the intent to sell. The conviction stems from an arrest in Los Banos in September of 2007, according to Merced County Deputy District Attorney Steven Slocum, who prosecuted the case.

Gabriel Reyes Guerrero, 35, and Martin Herrera Robles, 38, both of Moreno Valley, were arrested by officers from the Los Banos Police Department while driving a Ford truck registered to Robles with a lawnmower in the truck bed. Attached to the lawnmower was the grass catcher, and inside the grass catcher were two pounds of methamphetamine with an estimated street value of nearly \$100,000, Slocum said.

Officers also located two handguns, a .45 caliber and a .38 caliber, both semi-automatic. Neither gun was registered to Robles or Guerrero. The jury found both defendants guilty of personal possession of a firearm while trafficking narcotics, Slocum said.

"This jury did a very thorough job of weighing the evidence and the defendant's stories, which frankly were just not credible," Slocum said, noting that both defendants took the stand in their own defense.

Slocum credited the work of the Los Banos Police Department and the Merced Multi-Agency Narcotics Task Force in making the arrests. "Local law enforcement worked together to take down two Southern California dope dealers who were planning to peddle narcotics in our county," Slocum said.

The trial, which was held in front of Merced County Superior Court Judge Carol Ash, lasted seven days. The jury deliberated for less than five hours before returning with their verdicts, Slocum noted.

The two men face up to 14 years in state prison when sentenced next month by Judge Ash.