



OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
VAL VERDE, KINNEY & TERRELL
COUNTIES, TEXAS

SUZANNE WEST

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PRESS RELEASE

Benjamin Lopez, age 57, was found Guilty of Burglary of a Building and sentenced by a jury to 10 years in prison on April 13, 2026 in the 63rd District Court of Val Verde County, Texas.

On June 26, 2022 Defendant Benjamin Lopez was caught red-handed, attempting to steal items from the UPS storage shed by cutting a chain to gain entry. A 911 caller brought the police, and that eye witness testified in the defendant's November 2025 trial. Officers testified to bolt cutters and stolen items and gloves located in the defendant's truck upon arrival, and the broken lock on the ground. Defendant's truck had tape on the license plate. Defendant was arrested and later indicted for the state jail felony offense. However, because the defendant has 11 prior convictions (including 8 felonies) in multiple Texas counties—all for theft related offenses, his charges were enhanced at the time of indictment as a Habitual Felon and the case was prosecuted as a 2nd Degree Felony.

Defendant faced a trial of his peers on November 12, 2025 where he was represented by a local counsel and the Public Defender's Office counsel. Defendant's attorneys filed numerous pre-trial motions and proceeded to select a jury. Trial commenced with opening statements and evidence presentation. At the beginning of the second day of trial, Defendant informed the Court of his wish to proceed pro se, was provided required warnings as per the law, and Defendant's attorneys were required to remain as "stand by attorneys" to provide assistance should the defendant require expertise he did not hold.

The defendant testified on his own behalf during the trial and admitted to the crime. He also admitted to the prior convictions. The trial was paused for the defendant to receive a competency evaluation wherein he was deemed competent, and two weeks later the jury found the defendant guilty unanimously. Because the defendant challenged his own competency even after the first evaluation, the case was again postponed for a second evaluation and a separate competency jury trial before sentencing in the original jury proceeding.

The second evaluation occurred, and defendant told the psychiatrist that he was "fine" but he was possibly trying to stall the outcome of his trial. The testimony of competency from both evaluations were admitted as evidence in the competency trial on April 6, 2026. In this trial, the defendant legally cannot proceed pro se because of the nature of the proceedings, therefore he was represented by appointed counsel and an attorney ad litem, who argued on his behalf.

Assistant District Attorney Daniel Esquivel and DA Investigator Michelle Salinas worked tirelessly to protect the citizens of this county and others from this defendant, who has been praying upon other people for more than 30 years, while also protecting all the rights that this defendant holds under our Constitution as required by prosecutorial ethics. Thank you sincerely to both juries for time and attention, and to the Del Rio Police Department for a thorough investigation.