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[Fugitive found in Mississippi](#)

Cass County jury convicted man while he was on the run

by Lindsey Ziliak [Pharos-Tribune](#)

— Bondsmen say they searched high and low for a man who disappeared from Cass County five years ago and missed his own trial.

They never thought to look in Long Beach, Miss. — population 14,792.

That's exactly where 57-year-old Pedro Alvarez was finally found. Alvarez was extradited Wednesday to Logansport from the Mississippi city.

He found out during a hearing Thursday morning that a jury already convicted him in May 2006 of two Class B felony counts of dealing in cocaine, Cass Superior Court II Judge Rick Maughmer said.

Alvarez failed to show up for his trial. But since he already had been notified of the approaching court date and because witnesses had been subpoenaed, the trial went on without him.

Maughmer said the legal term is trial in absentia — something that isn't used often. This was a unique case, though, he said.

“He chose to run, but justice continued,” Maughmer said.

Alvarez was initially arrested in February 2004 after two controlled drug buys by a confidential informant. An informant bought five rocks of crack cocaine from Alvarez at his Market Street home and later in a grocery store parking lot, according to court documents.

When police served the warrant at Alvarez's home, they found money and more crack cocaine valued at \$1,000, they said.

After his arrest, Alvarez posted a \$25,000 surety bond through American Contractors Indemnity.

When the man disappeared, bondsmen went on a manhunt.

In court documents filed a year after Alvarez skipped town, bondsmen said they spent more than 70 hours searching for the man to no avail. They said they looked at seven addresses in Indianapolis and Logansport.

They believed he was on the run with a girlfriend whose last known address was in Baton Rouge, La., court documents state.

Those documents were filed in June 2007 as part of a motion American Contractors filed with the court. The motion asked for more time to track down Alvarez, so the company wouldn't have to forfeit the \$25,000 bond it had posted.

The court made the company pay \$20,000, 80 percent of the bond's value.

It took another four and a half years for someone to find Alvarez and bring him back to Logansport.

On Thursday, Maughmer scheduled a sentencing hearing for 11 a.m. Jan. 30. Each count of dealing cocaine carries a penalty range of 6 to 20 years in prison.