



Department of Justice

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THREE MS-13 LEADERS PLEAD GUILTY TO INVOLVEMENT IN A RACKETEERING CONSPIRACY

WASHINGTON – Three leaders of La Mara Salvatrucha, or MS-13, pleaded guilty to participation in a racketeering enterprise, Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Edward M. Yarbrough for the Middle District of Tennessee announced today.

At the plea hearing on July 28, 2008, in Nashville before Chief U.S. District Judge Todd J. Campbell of the Middle District of Tennessee, Oscar Serrano, a/k/a “Diablin,” Escolastico Serrano, a/k/a “Chito,” and Ronald Fuentes, a/k/a “Spia,” admitted that as leaders of the MS-13 gang, they conspired with others to participate in a pattern of racketeering activity in the Nashville metropolitan area, that included murder, attempted murder and witness tampering. In addition to personally committing various acts of violence, the three defendants admitted they exercised leadership by enforcing the rules of MS-13 and inciting other members to attack and kill rival gang members.

The three leaders were scheduled to go to trial on the RICO indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Jan. 10, 2007. Four other defendants were previously sentenced to lengthy prison terms after pleading guilty to the RICO conspiracy. Walter Hernandez was sentenced on March 31, 2008, to 324 months in prison. On Dec. 3 and Dec. 7, 2007, respectively, Henry Garballo-Vasquez and Jose Alfaro were sentenced to 240 months in prison. On Nov. 20, 2007, Geovanni Pena received a sentence of 235 months in prison. As part his guilty plea, Escolastico Serrano has agreed to be sentenced to 45 years in prison. At sentencing scheduled for Sept. 26, 2008, Oscar Serrano and Ronald Fuentes both face sentences ranging from 30 years in prison to life in prison.

The MS-13 street gang is a violent international criminal organization composed primarily of immigrants or descendants of immigrants from El Salvador. As alleged in the indictment, the purpose of the racketeering enterprise was to preserve and protect the power, territory and profits of the MS-13 enterprise through violent assaults, murder, threats of violence and intimidation.

“Today’s plea details the murder, intimidation and violence caused by criminal gangs such as MS-13 and underscores our commitment to bring such offenders to justice,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Matthew Friedrich. “By combining the resources and expertise of local, state and federal law enforcement, we can and we will disrupt and dismantle violent

criminal enterprises like MS-13.”

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jimmie Lynn Ramsaur of the Middle District of Tennessee and Trial Attorney John Han of the Criminal Division’s Gang Squad.

U.S. Attorney Yarbrough praised the efforts of prosecutors Ramsaur and Han saying, “These convictions of dangerous gang-related criminals come after many months of hard work by law enforcement officers from local and federal agencies. Ramsaur and Han, along with the entire team that put this case together, deserve the gratitude and respect of all Middle Tennesseans. Our office will continue to place strong emphasis on prosecution of gang members and individuals who pose a threat of violence in our community.”

The case was investigated by the Nashville Metropolitan Police Department’s Gang Suppression Unit; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement at the Department of Homeland Security; the Davidson County District Attorney General’s Office; the U.S. Attorney’s Office in the Middle District of Tennessee; and the Criminal Division’s Gang Squad.

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