



The United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
Western District of Louisiana

For Immediate Release
September 18, 2012

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Stephanie A. Finley
United States Attorney
(337) 262-6618
mona.hardwick@usdoj.gov

**SUPPLIER OF ACADIANA DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION
SENTENCED TO LIFE IN FEDERAL PRISON**

LAFAYETTE, La.: United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced that Antonio Luna Valdez, Jr. 45, of Weslaco, Texas, was sentenced late yesterday afternoon, to a term of life imprisonment for his role in a large-scale cocaine and marijuana drug trafficking organization. The sentence was handed down by U.S. District Judge Rebecca F. Doherty as a result of Valdez's February 16, 2012 conviction by a federal jury in Lafayette, La., for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute cocaine, cocaine base and marijuana.

Trial testimony revealed that Valdez, along with other family members, was involved in smuggling and transporting hundreds of kilos of cocaine and thousands of pounds of marijuana from Mexico into the United States, including the Western District of Louisiana, utilizing 18-wheelers, SUVs and other vehicles. Drug proceeds were then transported back to the Rio Grande Valley, Texas area. A large portion of the cocaine transported to Louisiana was converted into "crack" and distributed in the Lafayette-New Iberia area.

In connection with this case, the United States seized \$1,275,940 in United States currency, and an 18-wheeler used to traffic the narcotics related to the case.

U.S. Attorney Finley stated, "This was a complex drug organization that distributed enormous quantities of cocaine and marijuana in the Acadiana region and caused immeasurable harm to the community. This sentence is the result of a lot of hard work by dedicated prosecutors and law enforcement agents who are committed to ensuring that our communities do not fall prey to drug dealers. I hope it sends a clear message that there are serious consequences to dealing in drugs. The U.S. Attorney's Office, along with our federal, state and local law enforcement partners, will continue to be vigilant during the investigation and prosecution of those engaging in drug activity."

“This organization was responsible for the sale of huge quantities of drugs in our communities, poisoning lives and breaking dreams,” said Raymond R. Parmer, Jr., Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), New Orleans. “Taking down a criminal enterprise of this magnitude required a complex investigation that HSI was proud to lead and that wouldn’t have been possible without the host of federal, state and local partners that provided significant assistance in bringing Mr. Valdez and his cronies to justice.”

The investigation was led by Homeland Security Investigations. Also participating in the investigation were the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, Internal Revenue Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Louisiana State Police, and Lafayette Metro Narcotics Unit. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Daniel J. McCoy and Brett L. Grayson and Supervisory Assistant United States Attorney Richard A. Willis.

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