



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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District of Arizona*

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## **SONORA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO LEADING CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE**

TUCSON – On June 5, 2009, Carlos Molinares-Nunez, aka “Caliche”, pleaded guilty to charges of leading a continuing criminal enterprise and to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute over 1,000 kilograms of marijuana.

Molinares-Nunez was indicted on November 21, 2006 along with two of his lieutenants and on March 27, 2008, a superseding indictment added two more defendants to the charge of conspiracy. A plea to a third count of forfeiture of approximately \$218,000 in cash, real and personal property accumulated by Molinares-Nunez was also entered.

The case was the result of a three year investigation conducted by ICE, the DEA, the FBI and the Bisbee Police Department called “Operation Vanquish.” The investigation targeted an especially sophisticated and violent drug-trafficking organization operating out of Naco, Sonora, Mexico.

The organization, led by Molinares-Nunez, employed sophisticated electronic surveillance and communications to locate law-enforcement in their area of trafficking and were responsible for importing tons of marijuana into the United States. Nearly 32,232 pounds of marijuana alone were seized during the investigation. It is believed that over 30 individuals worked for Molinares-Nunez, who in turn worked for other Cartel members as a “gatekeeper” for his area around Naco.

Molinares-Nunez pleaded guilty to both of the charges against him in return for a sentence of 20 to 30 years. Had Molinares-Nunez been convicted after trial, the sentence he faced could have been life imprisonment.

The prosecution was handled by David A. Kern, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR 06-1955-TUC-JMR  
RELEASE NUMBER: 2009-184(Molinares-Nunez)  
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