



# Department of Justice

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Eastern District of California

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## **\$1 MILLION INTERNATIONAL DRUG CONSPIRACY RESULTS IN GUILTY VERDICTS**

FRESNO, Calif.—Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown and Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent-in-Charge Anthony Williams announced today jury verdicts convicting HARJEET MANN, 50, a Canadian national and resident of Bakersfield; SUKHLAJ DHALIWAL, 39, of Bakersfield; and GURMEET BISLA, 29, of Livingston, for conspiring to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute a large quantity of cocaine. In addition, MANN and DHALIWAL were convicted of attempting to possess with intent to distribute 70 kilograms of cocaine following their delivery of approximately \$843,000 in cash to an undercover narcotics agent.

Immediately following the jury verdicts, Senior United States District Judge Oliver W. Wanger found that \$1,011,068 in seized U.S. currency represented proceeds or monies used to facilitate drug trafficking and ordered its forfeiture. In addition, \$52,669 seized from MANN's bank accounts was previously forfeited administratively by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

This case was the product of an extensive Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation conducted by the Bakersfield DEA Resident Office, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Kern County Sheriff's Office, and Bakersfield Police Department. The Toronto North Drug Section of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Illinois State Police, Jasper County (Indiana) Sheriff's Department, Merced Police Department, and Livingston Police Department also assisted in the investigation.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Karen A. Escobar and Deanna Martinez, who are prosecuting the case, from 1994 to 2008 MANN was the leader of a cocaine smuggling operation that transported large quantities of cocaine in semi-tractor trailers to Canada for distribution to Asian gang members in the Toronto area. BISLA, a drug transporter for MANN, was stopped in Sheldon, Ill. while carrying \$169,910 in drug proceeds in a semi-tractor trailer, which he took without permission from NAV Trucking, a small trucking company in Livingston. The investigation culminated with the seizure of approximately \$843,000 in U.S. currency that MANN, his money courier, DHALIWAL, and a co-defendant, JASDEV SINGH, delivered to an undercover agent who had negotiated for the purchase of 70 kilograms of cocaine. SINGH, 34, of Bakersfield, entered a guilty plea to the drug conspiracy before the start of trial.

During negotiations between MANN, SINGH, and the undercover agent, MANN indicated that during the past five years he had shipped approximately 36,000 kilograms of cocaine from Bakersfield to Canada. In Canada, MANN's customers "cut" the product for street sales. MANN claimed, "I'm the biggest there is." He also offered to sell the undercover agent 50

kilogram buckets of ephedrine (a precursor chemical used to manufacture methamphetamine) for \$33,000 a bucket and told the undercover agent he smuggled the ephedrine into the United States from his native country of India.

The case has received extensive coverage in the Asian and Canadian press, which reported that MANN and SINGH, natives of the Punjabi village of Gureh, and DHALIWAL, from the neighboring village of Chimna, are considered modern day Robin Hoods in their villages stemming from their philanthropy. DHALIWAL admitted at trial that he gives large sums of money to the villagers of Chimna, notwithstanding the lack of any employment history for him in the United States, where he has resided since the early 1990's.

MANN, DHALIWAL, and BISLA are scheduled to appear for sentencing before District Judge Wanger on September 14, 2009. SINGH is scheduled to appear for sentencing on August 24, 2009.

All defendants face a mandatory minimum prison term of 10 years and a maximum of life, along with a maximum fine of \$4 million, for the drug offenses. The actual sentence, however, will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables and any applicable statutory sentencing factors.

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