



# Department of Justice

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Eastern District of California

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## GUILTY PLEA IN \$1.4 MILLION BAKERSFIELD DRUG BUST

FRESNO, Calif.—Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown and DEA Special Agent-in-Charge Anthony Williams announced today the first guilty plea in the federal prosecution of THAI HOANG NGUYEN, 32, of Surrey, British Columbia, Canada for conspiring to purchase and then resell 85 kilograms, or about 187 pounds, of cocaine. SOKHA BHOPAL, 50, of Valencia, Calif., VATH LIM, 34, of El Monte, Calif., and DAVINDER SINGH, 41, of Delta, British Columbia, Canada are also charged in the conspiracy.

This case is the product of an Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation by the Bakersfield DEA and Kern County Sheriff's Office with assistance from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

According to Assistant United States Karen A. Escobar, who is prosecuting the case, approximately \$1.2 million in cash was seized by DEA agents after BHOPAL, LIM, NGUYEN, and SINGH brought it to a drug deal to pay for the cocaine. The cash and another \$106,806 from an account maintained by BHOPAL have been forfeited as drug proceeds by the DEA.

NGUYEN acknowledged that after BHOPAL negotiated with an undercover officer for the purchase of 85 kilograms of cocaine, the undercover officer showed BHOPAL, NGUYEN, and SINGH multiple kilograms of cocaine that were available for purchase. The next day, BHOPAL, NGUYEN, SINGH, and LIM delivered two large, black suitcases containing \$1.2 million to the undercover officer to pay for the 85 kilograms of cocaine.

The DEA and Kern County Sheriff's Office seized over \$1 million in a similar operation in Bakersfield involving Canadian citizens attempting to purchase cocaine for distribution in Canada – HARJEET MANN, 50, a Canadian national and resident of Bakersfield; SUKHRAJ DHALIWAL, 39, of Bakersfield; and GURMEET BISLA, 29, of Livingston, who were found guilty following a three-week jury trial in federal court in Fresno that concluded last week, and JASDEV SINGH, 34, of Bakersfield, who entered a guilty plea before trial. As a result of these two cases, the DEA and Kern County Sheriff's Office have seized over \$2.4 million.

NGUYEN is scheduled for sentencing before Senior United States District Judge Oliver W. Wanger on September 14, 2009. SINGH's next court date is scheduled for July 27, 2009. BHOPAL and LIM are scheduled to appear again before Judge Wanger on August 3, 2009.

NGUYEN faces a minimum prison term of 10 years and a maximum of life, along with a maximum fine of \$4 million. 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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