

# ***NEWS RELEASE***

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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Karen P. Hewitt***

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***For Immediate Release***

### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** - September 21, 2009

Karen P. Hewitt, United States Attorney for the Southern District of California, announced that Juan Manuel Rodriguez was sentenced late on September 18, 2009 to 360 months in prison, after his guilty plea to conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana. United States District Judge John A. Houston, who imposed the sentence, previously ordered Rodriguez and his co-defendants to forfeit their interests in two Vista, California residences, firearms, and currency.

According to court records, Rodriguez was arrested in June 2005 with dozens of others at the conclusion of an investigation led by the North County Regional Gang Task Force, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the San Diego County Sheriff's Department. During the course of the investigation, agents seized large quantities of methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana distributed by Rodriguez and his underlings in Hawaii, Utah, North Carolina, Illinois, Nevada, Alabama, Wisconsin, Florida, and California. Rodriguez was the leader of a well-established organization that used multiple couriers to import methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana into the United States from Mexico, then

distributed the drugs from multiple stash houses in Vista, California to customers and redistributors across the United States. From their base of operations in San Diego North County, Rodriguez and his co-defendants conducted daily drug transactions in the five months preceding their arrests, as evidenced by wiretapped calls and other investigative techniques. The investigation also revealed that Rodriguez's cousin, former United States Border Patrol Agent ("BPA"), Eric Balderas and former BPA Oscar Ortiz, conspired to smuggle aliens into the United States. Balderas and Ortiz, who was himself an illegal alien, both pleaded guilty to that charge and others.

Thirty-six defendants arrested in the investigation have pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana, money laundering, conspiracy to bring in aliens, and various firearms charges. Among other defendants, the court previously sentenced Rodriguez's cousin, Francisco Balderas, Jr., to 240 months in prison and another top lieutenant, Juan Ochoa, to 210 months in prison.

**DEFENDANT**

Case Number 05CR527-JAH

Juan Manuel Rodriguez

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES**

Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine, Cocaine, and Marijuana, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 846 and 841.

**AGENCIES**

North County Regional Gang Task Force  
Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
San Diego Sheriff's Department  
Federal Bureau of Investigation