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# **News Release**

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## **26 indicted in connection with cocaine, methamphetamine distribution**

Twenty-six individuals were recently indicted in connection with a Mexican-based drug cartel that distributed methamphetamine and cocaine throughout Minnesota for the past several years. The indictment was unsealed today following the arrest of 23 of the individuals in both Minnesota and Texas.

Charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine and cocaine are: Roberto Guadalupe Aleman, 28, Hidalgo, Texas; Maria Isabel Aleman, 61, Hidalgo; Juan Fidel Aleman, 31, Swanville, Minn.; Daniel Armando Aleman, 30, Hidalgo; Ernesto Jimenez Guzman, 36, Hidalgo; Esaul Miranda, 36, Hidalgo; Jesus Villanueva, 36, Mission, Texas; Nicolas Lara Munoz, 48, Burnsville, Minn.; Josue Azahael Garza, 19, Mission; Emily Judith Balderas, 26, McAllen, Texas; Arcelia Reyes, 37, McAllen, Texas; Andres Guzman Fegaroa, 24, Mission; Maria Luisa Stay, 28, Princeton, Minn.; Maria Almaguer, 40, Cold Spring, Minn.; Oscar Damian Limon, 30, Faribault, Minn.; Bartolo Enrique Vega, Jr., 40, Owatonna, Minn.; Carlos Alejandro Azham Martinez, 31, Owatonna; David Paul Harlander, 54, St. Joseph, Minn.; Luiz Gerardo Flores, 27, St. Paul; Refugio Hernandez-Muniz, 51, Donnelly, Minn.; Rafael Quintanilla, 36, Hidalgo; Ricardo Quintanilla, 36, Hidalgo; Luiz Manuel Roman, 36, Hidalgo; Miriam Leal, 29, Mission; Alejandro Paz, 33, Hidalgo; and Martin Jimenez, 32, North Freedom, Wisc.

Also charged with one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering are: Roberto Aleman, Maria Aleman, Daniel Aleman, Miranda, Villanueva, Munoz, Stay, Almaguer, Rafael Quintanilla, Ricardo Quintanilla, Roman, Leal, Paz and Jimenez.

Juan Aleman was also charged with three counts of distribution of cocaine, one count of distribution of methamphetamine and five counts of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine.

Roberto Aleman was also charged with three counts of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine, three counts of distribution of cocaine, one count of possession with intent to distribute cocaine, one count of aiding and abetting the distribution of methamphetamine, four

counts of attempt to distribute cocaine and three counts of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine.

Daniel Aleman was also charged with three counts of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine. Stay was also charged with three counts of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine and one count of distribution of cocaine.

Vega was also charged with one count of possession with intent to distribute cocaine and one count of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine. Limon was also charged with one count of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine and one count of distribution of cocaine.

Munoz was also charged with one count of possession with intent to distribute cocaine; Muniz was charged with three counts of distribution of cocaine; Almaguer was also charged with one count of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine; Harlander was also charged with one count of possession with intent to distribute cocaine; Balderas and Garza were also charged with one count of attempt to distribute cocaine; Villanueva was also charged with one count of possession with intent to distribute cocaine; Flores was also charged with one count of aiding and abetting the distribution of methamphetamine; Miranda was also charged with one count of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine; Martinez was also charged with one count of aiding and abetting the distribution of cocaine; Maria Aleman was also charged with two counts of attempted distribution of cocaine; and Guzman-Fegaroa was also charged with one count of attempted distribution of cocaine.

Their indictment alleges that from Dec. 29, 2005, through April 20, 2009, the 26 defendants knowingly and intentionally conspired with each other and others to distribute 500 or more grams of methamphetamine and 5 or more kilograms of cocaine. The indictment also alleges that the defendants charged with money laundering conspired to conduct more than \$2.4 million in financial transactions by depositing money into various accounts in Minnesota in increments under \$10,000 that were withdrawn in Texas on or about the same day with the intent to avoid the federal reporting requirements.

In Minnesota, authorities executed search warrants at residences in Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Cold Spring, Saint Wendel Township and St. Cloud.

“Cocaine is not manufactured in Minnesota, so it takes a violent criminal syndicate to bring and distribute it here,” said Bernard J. Zapor, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives St. Paul Division. “It took some very dedicated law enforcement officers working together to stop this contagion.”

“It is a proud day for the law enforcement partners, who worked tirelessly to dismantle the targeted drug organization that attempted to entrench its operations within Minnesota,” said Gary Olenkiewicz, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s Chicago Field Division, which oversees the Minneapolis District Office. “DEA and its partners are committed to ensuring that Minnesotans have a safe place to raise their families – safe from the harmful effects of drugs on our youth and safe from the violence that so often accompanies those who supply, transport and distribute drugs.”

Seized during today’s operation, known as Operation Malverde, were four firearms, 12 vehicles, cocaine, cash and assorted drug paraphernalia.

According to a joint DEA/ATF search warrant affidavit, in April 2008 authorities began investigating a drug-trafficking organization that involved Roberto Aleman. Police made numerous controlled purchases from and recorded telephone calls to and from members of the organization.

During the course of the investigation, police seized more than \$505,000 in four separate seizures, including one at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. On April 25, 2009, Reyes and Miranda were arrested at a Burnsville bus station in possession of 2 kilograms of cocaine.

During several seizures in Minnesota and Texas from July 7, 2008, through April 25, 2009, police seized more than 41 kilograms of cocaine from couriers and from customers of the organization.

The affidavit states that the organization was being supplied directly by the Gulf Cartel, a Mexican-based drug-trafficking organization that traffics in cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine and heroin. The Gulf Cartel is a chief rival of the Sinaloa Cartel, another major Mexican-based drug-trafficking organization.

A 27th individual was also arrested and charged in connection with the drug organization. Rodolfo Tello-Aros, 43, Brooklyn Park, was charged today via criminal complaint with one count of possession with intent to distribute approximately 1,000 grams of cocaine.

If convicted, the 26 defendants face a potential maximum penalty of life in prison on the conspiracy count. All sentences are determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the DEA, the ATF, the Central Minnesota Drug Gang Task Force and the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport Police Department with assistance from the St. Paul Police Department, the St. Cloud Police Department, the Northwest Metro Task Force, the Minnesota State Patrol, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the South Central Drug Investigation Unit, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Duluth Police Department, the Sherburne County Sheriff's Office and the Minnesota Gang Strike Force. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jeffrey M. Bryan and Christian S. Wilton with assistance from the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas.

An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.