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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
November 18, 2010

DEA OPERATIONS DISMANTLE TWO MAJOR **HEROIN TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS**

On November 17, 2010, federal, state and local law enforcement officers arrested ten Mexican nationals and executed a series of search warrants in the Albuquerque metropolitan area in connection with two Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) investigations targeting two major heroin trafficking organizations. More than twenty pounds of heroin were seized during yesterday's enforcement action, one of the largest heroin seizures in New Mexico.

The DEA investigations, code-named "Operation Brown Stone" and "Operation Sole Runner," leading to yesterday's arrests and seizures were designated as Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) operations. OCDETF is a nationwide program that combines the resources and unique expertise of federal agencies, along with their local counterparts, in a coordinated attack against major drug trafficking and money laundering organizations. Operation Brown Stone targeted an organization that allegedly distributed several kilograms of heroin in the Albuquerque area on a monthly basis in addition to distributing other narcotics including methamphetamine and marijuana.

Operation Sole Runner was aimed at dismantling an organization that allegedly smuggled heroin from Mexico into New Mexico and then distributed the heroin throughout the country.

The ten defendants, who generally are charged with unlawfully trafficking in heroin and methamphetamine in a series of criminal complaints, were presented before United States Magistrate Judge Robert Hayes Scott today. The defendants are detained pending preliminary hearings and detention hearings scheduled for November 19, 2010.

The defendants are charged as follows:

United States v. Manuel Fuentes-Careno and Juan Manuel Fuentes-Ontiveros, Case No. 10-MJ-2988, charging Fuentes-Careno, 24, and Fuentes-Ontiveros, 23, both Mexican nationals, with possession with intent to distribute more than fourteen pounds of heroin, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(a)(1)(A). Maximum penalties: a mandatory minimum 10 years to a maximum life imprisonment and a maximum \$4,000,000 fine.

United States v. Carlos Nohe Zamudio-Beltran, Case No. 10-MJ-2989, charging Zamudio-Beltran, 35, of Sinaloa, Mexico, with possession with intent to distribute more than six pounds of heroin, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(a)(1)(A). Maximum penalties: a mandatory minimum 10 years to a maximum life imprisonment and a maximum \$4,000,000 fine.

United States v. Jose Carmen Rivas-Aispuro, Case No. 10-MJ-2986, charging Rivas-Aispuro, 38, a Mexican national, with distribution of more than 100 grams of heroin, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(a)(1)(B). Maximum penalties: a mandatory minimum 5 years to a maximum 40 years imprisonment and a maximum \$2,000,000 fine.

United States v. Arturo Rosales-Sanchez and Celso Rosales-Tello, Case No. 10-MJ-2991, charging Rosales-Sanchez, 31, of Nayarit, Sinaloa, Mexico, and Rosales-Tello, 19, of Jalisco, Mexico, with possession with intent to distribute of more than 100 grams of heroin, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(a)(1)(B). Maximum penalties: a mandatory minimum 5 years to a maximum 40 years imprisonment and a maximum \$2,000,000 fine.

United States v. Jose Luis Madrigal-Hernandez and Victor Arturo Ibarra-Lizama, Case No. 10-MJ-2992, charging Madrigal-Hernandez, 26, and Ibarra-Lizama, 24, both of Nayarit, Sinaloa, Mexico, with possession with intent to distribute heroin, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(a)(1)(C). Maximum penalties: up to twenty years imprisonment and a maximum \$1,000,000 fine.

United States v. Celido Zamudio-Beltran and Miriam Rivera-Gambino, Case No. 10-MJ-2991, charging Zamudio-Beltran, 23, of Durango, Mexico, and Rivera-Gambino, a Mexican national, with possession with intent to distribute less than 50 grams of methamphetamine, in violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1), 841(a)(1)(C). Maximum penalties: up to twenty years imprisonment and a maximum \$1,000,000 fine.

United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales emphasized the significance of the arrests and seizures:

In June 2010, when law enforcement officers arrested twenty defendants who allegedly trafficked heroin in the Espanola Valley, I promised that those arrests were only a first step towards bringing about positive changes in the Espanola Valley and that our ultimate goal was to reduce the availability of heroin so that people in the Valley will not abuse heroin or become addicted. Today, together with my law enforcement partners, I am making good on that pledge. The defendants charged today allegedly belonged to organizations that imported heroin and other narcotics from Mexico into New Mexico and distributed that heroin in our communities. With these arrests, we have shut down two significant heroin trafficking operations and have significantly reduced the availability of heroin in New Mexico. These arrests should serve to remind New Mexicans of the law enforcement community's collective and continued commitment to rid our communities of dangerous narcotics.

DEA Special Agent in Charge Joseph M. Arabit added:

These arrests and seizures strike a significant blow to the heroin trafficking trade in New Mexico and will have an immediate impact in this community and the surrounding region, where heroin has devastating health and societal effects. The crimes charged are serious, and, if convicted, the defendants will spend a good part of their lives behind bars.

These cases were investigated primarily by the DEA with assistance from the United States Marshals Service, the New Mexico State Police, the Albuquerque Police Department, the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office, the HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) program, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Elaine Ramirez.

Allegations in criminal complaints are merely accusations. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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