

For Immediate Release
July 20, 2011

UNITED STATES ATTORNEY AND UNITED STATES MARSHAL
ESTABLISH NEW ASSET RECOVERY UNIT

ALBUQUERQUE – United States Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales and United States Marshal Conrad Candelaria announced the establishment of a new Asset Recovery Unit within the United States Attorney's Office (USAO) that is staffed with USAO and U.S. Marshals Service personnel. The Asset Recovery Unit is responsible for handling criminal and civil forfeitures and financial litigation. It also is charged with carrying out the primary goals of the Justice Department's Asset Forfeiture Program, which include:

- Building collaborative relationships with investigative agencies in order to maximize asset identification and enhancing seizures and forfeitures related to criminal investigations.
- Collecting outstanding forfeiture related debts owed to the United States.
- Facilitating criminal and civil forfeiture proceedings and increasing proceeds to support both victims compensation and equitable sharing by federal, state and local law enforcement.
- Supporting priorities and initiatives of the Department of Justice through financial investigations, targeting criminals, and dismantling criminal enterprises in order to strip them of their ill gotten gains.
- Offering better coordination amongst federal, state and local agencies resulting in better preservation of asset value, decreased asset management expenses, and protection of third party interests.

The Asset Forfeiture Program was created in 1984, when Congress passed the Comprehensive Crime Control Act, which gave federal prosecutors new forfeiture provisions to combat crime and created the Justice Department's Asset Forfeiture Fund. Its participants include the United States Attorneys, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms

and Explosives, the Food and Drug Administration, the Department of Agriculture, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security, the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service.

In addition to furthering the goals of the Asset Forfeiture Program, the Asset Recovery Unit is also responsible for collecting non-forfeiture related debts owed to the United States, enforcing judgments entered in favor of the United States, and recovering restitution on behalf of crime victims.

The Asset Response Unit is part of the USAO's Criminal Division in Albuquerque, and is staffed by two Assistant U.S. Attorneys from the Criminal Division, a Deputy U.S. Marshal, two paralegal specialists, and a legal assistant. An Assistant U.S. Attorney from the USAO's Las Cruces Branch Office supports the Asset Recovery Unit's work on matters relating to cases handled by the Branch Office.

According to Justice Department records, the USAO in New Mexico contributed to the collection of \$5,280,514 in fiscal year 2010. Of this amount, \$2,260,311 was collected in criminal actions and \$3,020,201 was collected in civil actions. A portion of this amount, \$1,243,296 was collected in shared cases in which one or more U.S. Attorney's Offices or Department of Justice litigating divisions were also involved. Additionally, the USAO collected \$2,775,000 in criminal and civil forfeitures. United States Attorney Gonzales and Marshal Candelaria anticipate that the new Asset Recovery Unit will significantly increase the funds collected by the USAO.

"This new unit is an essential component to a multi-pronged approach to dismantle criminal organizations and individuals that are profiting the most from their illicit activities. It also puts us in a stronger position to recover debts owed to the people of the United

States by individuals who thus far have evaded their obligations," said United States Attorney Gonzales. "I appreciate Marshal Candelaria's enthusiastic partnership and the dedication of his talented staff."

Marshal Candelaria said, "In this most recent broad based and proven law enforcement initiative, the Marshals Service for the District of New Mexico is proud to partner with the United States Attorney Office in the establishment of the Financial Litigation Unit, which is due in large part to the leadership and vision of U.S. Attorney Ken Gonzales; this highly specialized unit will be comprised of skilled and knowledgeable members of the U.S. Attorney's Office and the Marshals Service. This combined force will be the tip of spear that will be instrumental in the dismantling of criminal enterprises that impact the lives of all New Mexicans."

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