

For Immediate Release  
November 30, 2011

**FEDERAL INVESTIGATION DISMANTLES MAJOR METHAMPHETAMINE  
TRAFFICKING RING OPERATING IN SOUTHEASTERN NEW MEXICO**

***20 Charged with Methamphetamine Trafficking in Eddy County***

LAS CRUCES – On November 29, 2011, a federal grand jury returned a two-count indictment charging 17 alleged members of a methamphetamine trafficking organization operating in Southeastern New Mexico with conspiracy to violate the federal narcotics laws. Another three individuals were charged with methamphetamine trafficking offenses in criminal complaints also filed on November 29, 2011.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales, joined by FBI Special Agent in Charge Carol K.O. Lee and DEA Special Agent in Charge Joseph M. Arabit, announced that the charges in the indictment and criminal complaints are the result of a seven-month Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation led by the FBI's office in Roswell, N.M., and the DEA's office in Las Cruces, N.M. 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.

The indictment and criminal complaints were unsealed today after 13 of the 20 defendants were arrested during a multi-agency enforcement operation led by the FBI and the DEA. The following nine defendants who are charged in the indictment were arrested today: **Michael Roy Sing**, 53, **Joaquin Estrello**, **Terry Owens**, 51, **Chris Grado**, 34, all of Carlsbad, N.M.; **Monica Grado**, 29, and **Josh Wallace**, 27, both of Artesia, N.M.; **Stacy L. Batie**, 38, of Hagerman, N.M.; **Martiniano Marin-Robles**, 66, of Lake Arthur, N.M.; and **Jerry Plank**, 29, of Lovington, N.M. The following three defendants who are charged in criminal complaints also

were arrested today: **Ismael Chavarria**, 26, **Tiffany Flores**, 34, and **Refugio Reza**, 50, of Artesia, N.M. These defendants made their initial appearances in federal court in Roswell, N.M., today. They will remain in federal custody pending detention hearings that will be held in the federal courthouse in Las Cruces, N.M., later this week.

Three of the defendants charged in the indictment, **Manuel Fierro-Carrasco, Jr.**, 29, and **Tyler Grantham**, 26, both of Artesia, N.M., and **Adrian Garcia**, 24, of Canutillo, Tex., previously were arrested in Artesia on October 31, 2011, based on a criminal complaint. The complaint alleges that law enforcement officials seized approximately seven pounds of methamphetamine from a vehicle driven by Garcia, and \$50,000 from Fierro-Carrasco's residence. Fierro-Carrasco and Garcia are detained pending trial; Grantham is on conditions of release under pretrial supervision.

Three other defendants charged in the indictment, **Angel J. Fierro, Jr.**, 29, and **Rodrigo Carrillo-Manriquez**, 24, both of Artesia, and **Luis Alberto Carrasco**, 22, of Canutillo, Tex., previously were arrested on November 10, 2011 based on a criminal complaint. The complaint alleges that, on August 25, 2011, U.S. Border Patrol agents seized approximately nine pounds of methamphetamine hidden in a sack of horse feed in a horse trailer being pulled by a vehicle driven by Carrillo-Manriquez during an inspection at the U.S. Border Patrol Checkpoint on U.S. Highway 62/180 between El Paso, Tex., and Carlsbad, N.M. All three are detained pending trial.

Two defendants charged in the indictment, **Pablo Carrasco**, 30, a Mexican national, and **Larry D. Cravens**, 47, of Artesia, N.M., have yet to be arrested and are considered fugitives.

Count 1 of the indictment alleges that the 17 defendants engaged in a conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute methamphetamine from August through November 10, 2011. According to the indictment, members of the conspiracy allegedly smuggled large quantities of

methamphetamine from El Paso, Tex., to Artesia, N.M. Count 2 charges one of the defendants, Angel J. Fierro with a money laundering offense. The indictment also seeks forfeiture of \$150,000 in alleged profits from the methamphetamine trafficking enterprise.

If convicted of the conspiracy charge, each of the 17 defendants charged in the indictment faces a maximum penalty of imprisonment for not less than ten years up to life, at least five years of supervised release, and a \$10 million fine. Fierro faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison, four years of supervised release, and a \$500,000 fine, if convicted of the money laundering charge.

The three defendants charged in the criminal complaints are alleged to have sold distribution quantities of methamphetamine to undercover agents and confidential informants working with the Pecos Valley Drug Task Force. Flores and Reza face a maximum penalty of imprisonment for not less than ten years up to life, at least five years of supervised release, and a \$10 million fine, if convicted. Chavarria faces a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment, at least three years of supervised release, and a \$1 million fine, if convicted of the offense with which he is charged.

In making today's announcement, U.S. Attorney Gonzales emphasized the importance of the multi-agency investigation: "Methamphetamine is the drug most often associated with violent crime and property crime in New Mexico. When we attack methamphetamine trafficking in our communities, we reduce the incidence of other crime that goes hand in hand with drug trafficking. During this investigation, methamphetamine representing more than 10,000 individual doses with a retail street value exceeding \$700,000 was seized – methamphetamine that never hit our neighborhoods. Today's operation is a significant step in improving the public safety in Southeastern New Mexico, and I am proud of being part of the continuing effort to

protect our communities.”

FBI Special Agent in Charge Lee said, “I would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of the FBI and DEA special agents involved in this case, as well as the important contributions of the Pecos Valley Drug Task Force in Carlsbad. The FBI along with the U.S. Attorney’s Office and our law enforcement partners throughout New Mexico are committed to apprehending the drug traffickers who prey on our communities.”

“With these arrests, DEA and its federal, state, and local law enforcement partners have dismantled an organization responsible for supplying large quantities of methamphetamine to communities in Southeastern New Mexico,” added DEA Special Agent in Charge Arabit. “Methamphetamine can be particularly destructive to the quality of life in our communities, and we will continue to work together to target criminal organizations and their assets to ensure that drug traffickers are held responsible for the harm they cause. “

This case was investigated by the FBI, DEA and the Pecos Valley Drug Task Force with assistance from the Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations Division, the Chaves County Drug Task Force and the U.S. Border Patrol. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Stephen H. Wong and Renee L. Camacho.

Charges in indictments and criminal complaints are only accusations. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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