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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**For Immediate Release**

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**FOURTEEN SANTA FE-AREA MEN FACE COCAINE TRAFFICKING  
CHARGES AS A RESULT OF MULTI-AGENCY INVESTIGATION**

ALBUQUERQUE – Fourteen men have been indicted and charged with federal narcotics trafficking offenses as the result of a three-year investigation by the FBI’s Safe Streets Task Force and the HIDTA Region III Narcotics Task Force that targeted major cocaine trafficking organizations operating in Santa Fe County.

The results of the investigation were announced this afternoon by U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales, Special Agent in Charge Carol K.O. Lee of the FBI’s Albuquerque Division, New Mexico State Police Chief Robert Shilling, Santa Fe County Sheriff Robert A. Garcia, and Santa Fe Police Deputy Chief William R. Johnson.

The fourteen defendants are charged in three indictments, including nine who are charged in a 42-count indictment that was filed under seal yesterday by a federal grand jury in Albuquerque. The indictment was unsealed earlier today following an early morning arrest operation that resulted in the arrests of the following seven defendants in Santa Fe County: Aldo Erives-Lopez, 29, Armando Gutierrez, 26, Ramiro Andazola, 41, Diego Encineas, 22, Javier Morales-Varela, 37, Miguel Gallegos, 30, Manuel Marquez, 38, and Diego Tena, 29. The remaining defendant has yet to be arrested and is considered a fugitive.

The defendants arrested in Santa Fe this morning will make their initial appearances in federal court in Albuquerque tomorrow morning.

In announcing the results of the investigation, U.S. Attorney Gonzales said, “Residents from many of our communities have very good reason to complain of seemingly rampant drug dealing in their neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the City Different is no exception and there is a lot of work to be done here in Santa Fe County. We know that the problem is widespread and that it leads to violence, property crime and many other problems. I want to thank the FBI, New Mexico State Police Chief Shilling, Sheriff Garcia and Santa Fe Police Chief Rael for an effective investigation that uncovered significant cocaine trafficking operations here in Santa Fe County.”

“Today's successful operation is an excellent example of teamwork between the FBI and our partners at the U.S. Attorney's Office, the New Mexico State Police, Santa Fe County Sheriff's Office and Santa Fe Police Department,” said Special Agent in Charge Lee of the Albuquerque Division of the FBI. “FBI Special Agents worked closely with investigators of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Region Three Narcotics Task Force and the FBI's Safe Streets Task Force to target these alleged drug traffickers. The FBI will continue to work aggressively to keep illegal drugs out of our communities, and to dismantle the criminal networks that profit from narcotics trafficking.”

Chief Shilling of the New Mexico State Police said, “This successful operation is proof, once again, of the ongoing cooperation of our federal, state, and local partners. It's proof too of our commitment to the safety and security of our citizens by aggressively pursuing narcotic violators in our communities. ”

Santa Fe County Sheriff Garcia said, “I want to thank all of the officers and agents who participated in this investigation. Although this investigation was a great success, we still have more work to do as we move forward. I look forward to continuing to work with the FBI and the agencies that participate in the HIDTA Region III Narcotics Task Force as we continue our efforts to curb crime in Santa Fe County.”

“The distribution and use of narcotics serves as an axis from which many of the crimes our community experiences manifest. The success of this operation strikes a blow to the drug trade in Santa Fe, which will invariably help to diminish other crimes, such as burglary, that harm our community,” added Deputy Chief William R. Johnson of the Santa Fe Police Department.

#### Summary of Charges

U.S. v. Erives-Lopez, et al. Counts 1 through 3 of the indictment alleges that Erives-Lopez participated in three separate conspiracies to distribute cocaine in Santa Fe County. Count 1 alleges that Erives-Lopez and seven of his co-defendants conspired to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine between Sept. 2011 and June 2012; Count 2 alleges that Erives-Lopez and Andazola conspired to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine from Nov. 2011 through June 2012; and Count 3 alleges that Erives-Lopez and Marquez conspired to distribute cocaine between Nov. 2011 and June 2012. The maximum penalty for a conviction on each of Counts 1 and 2 is a minimum ten years' to a maximum of life imprisonment and a \$10 million fine. The maximum penalty for a conviction on Count 3 is a minimum five years to a maximum of 40 years of imprisonment and a \$5 million fine.

Counts 4 through 12 charge Erives-Lopez with distributing quantities of cocaine in Santa Fe County on nine separate occasions between Aug. 2010 and Nov. 2011. The maximum penalty for a conviction on each of Counts 4 through 10 and 12 is 20 years of imprisonment and

a \$1 million fine. The maximum penalty for a conviction on Count 11 is a minimum of five years to a maximum of 40 years of imprisonment and a \$5 million fine.

Counts 13 through 42 of the indictment charge the defendants with using communication devices to facilitate drug trafficking crimes (sometimes referred to as “phone counts”). The maximum penalty for a conviction on each of the phone counts is four years of imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

U.S. v. Molina-Miramontes. Four other defendants previously were arrested on cocaine trafficking charges as a result of this investigation. Sergio Molina-Miramontes, 33, Joel Granillo-Ledesma, 30, Noe Paz-Lopez, 28, and Jerry Velarde, 39, are charged in a 25-count superseding indictment that was filed on May 23, 2012. Molina-Miramontes, Granillo-Ledesma and Paz-Lopez are Mexican nationals who were residing in Santa Fe prior to being arrested. Velarde, a resident of Velarde, N.M., is a U.S. citizen who was employed by the New Mexico Transportation Department as a civil engineering technician prior to his arrest on May 29, 2012. All four of the defendants charged in the 25-count superseding indictment are detained pending trial.

Count 1 of the superseding indictment charges Molina-Miramontes, Granillo-Ledesma, Paz-Lopez and Velarde with conspiring to distribute cocaine in Santa Fe County between Sept. 2010 and April 2012. Counts 2 through 10 charge Molina-Miramontes and Granillo-Ledesma with distributing cocaine on nine separate occasions between Sept. 2010 and Sept. 2011. The maximum penalty for a conviction on each of Counts 2 through 9 is 20 years of imprisonment and a \$1 million fine. The maximum penalty for a conviction on Count 10 is a minimum five years to a maximum of 40 years of imprisonment and a \$5 million fine.

Counts 11-25 of the superseding indictment charge Molina-Miramontes, Granillo-Ledesma, Paz-Lopez and Velarde with using communication devices to facilitate drug trafficking crimes (sometimes referred to as “phone counts”). The maximum penalty for a conviction on each of the phone counts is four years of imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

U.S. v. Munoz. Lawrence Munoz, 27, also a Santa Fe resident, is charged with distributing crack cocaine in Santa Fe County in an indictment that was filed on March 13, 2012. According to court filings, on Jan. 11, 2011, Munoz allegedly sold four and a half ounces of crack cocaine to an undercover officer for \$3,600. Munoz is detained pending trial. If convicted, Munoz faces a maximum penalty of minimum five years to a maximum of 40 years of imprisonment and a \$5 million fine.

The cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joel R. Meyers and Sean J. Sullivan, and investigated by the FBI’s Safe Streets Task Force and the HIDTA Region III Narcotics Task Force, which is comprised of the New Mexico State Police, the Santa Fe County Sheriff’s Office and the Santa Fe Police Department, with assistance from Homeland Security Investigations, US Department of Homeland Security.

The investigation was designated as part of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program, a nationwide Department of Justice 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.

Since 1992, the FBI has relied on Safe Streets Violent Crime Initiative to address violent street gangs and drug-related violence through the establishment of FBI sponsored, long-term, proactive task forces focusing on drug trafficking, violent gangs, crimes of violence, and the apprehension of violent fugitives.

HITDA, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program funded by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, was created by Congress with the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988. It provides assistance to federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies operating in areas determined to be critical drug-trafficking regions of the United States. HIDTA strives to reduce drug availability by supporting multi-agency task forces and facilitating intelligence-driven interdiction and investigation aimed at disrupting or dismantling international and domestic drug trafficking organizations and their harmful consequences.

Indictment are merely accusations, and defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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