



PRESS RELEASE

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**NINETEEN MEMBERS OF NEW MEXICO DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION
INDICTED ON DRUG TRAFFICKING AND MONEY LAUNDERING CHARGES**

ALBUQUERQUE – Nineteen members of a major drug trafficking organization allegedly operating in central and northern New Mexico were indicted on drug trafficking and money laundering charges by a federal grand jury on Dec. 12, 2012. The indictment was announced by U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales, Carol K.O. Lee, Special Agent in Charge of the Albuquerque Division of the FBI, Gabriel Grchan, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Phoenix Field Office of IRS Criminal Investigation, and Chief Ray D. Schultz of the Albuquerque Police Department.

The 60-count indictment was unsealed this morning following a coordinated series of law enforcement operations on Dec. 14, 2012, that resulted in the arrests of 13 of the 19 defendants charged in the indictment. The 13 defendants made their initial appearances in federal court this afternoon.

The indictment is the result of a sixteen-month multi-agency investigation into a drug trafficking organization allegedly headed by Christopher Roybal, 33, of Albuquerque, N.M., which was led by the FBI, IRS and Albuquerque Police Department, with assistance from the DEA, the HIDTA Region I Narcotic Task Force and the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office. The investigation, code-named "Operation Rain Check," was designated as part of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force ("OCDETF") program. OCDETF is a nationwide Department of Justice program that combines the resources and unique expertise of federal agencies, along with their local counterparts, in a coordinated effort to disrupt and dismantle major drug trafficking organizations.

According to the indictment, Christopher Roybal and ten others conspired to distribute quantities of cocaine in New Mexico between Aug. 2011 and Dec. 2012. The indictment alleges that certain defendants distributed cocaine on four occasions between Aug. 2011 and April 2012. It further alleges that Christopher Roybal and nine others conspired to distribute marijuana between Oct. 2011 and Dec. 2012, and charges certain defendants with distributing marijuana on nine occasions between Oct. 2011 and April 2012. The indictment also includes three separate money laundering conspiracies, 22 money laundering offenses, and 18 "telephone

counts,” offenses alleging the use of a communications device to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.

The indictment seeks forfeiture of property constituting, or derived from proceeds obtained directly, or indirectly, from the defendants’ illegal drug trafficking and financial crimes, including an Albuquerque residence owned by Christopher Roybal and “Air Force One Express Car Wash,” located on Gibson Blvd. SW in Albuquerque. It also seeks forfeiture of funds in numerous bank accounts and nine vehicles, as well as a money judgment of at least \$4,176,000.00, the amount of money allegedly derived or involved in the offenses alleged in the indictment.

During the course of the investigation, law enforcement officers purchased 3.5 kilograms of cocaine and approximately 18 pounds of high-grade marijuana. During Friday’s law enforcement operations, officers executed search warrants at six residences and one business in Albuquerque, and served six restraining orders on six bank accounts. The officers also served orders that restrain Christopher Roybal’s residence and “Air Force One Express Car Wash,” and seized eight vehicles, four motorcycles and a Sea-Doo watercraft.

In announcing the indictment, U.S. Attorney Gonzales said, “This investigation illustrates the serious scope of the drug business in New Mexico, the money and drugs that change hands, and the trafficking pattern between Mexico, Albuquerque and northern New Mexico.”

“Large-scale operations such as Friday’s don’t happen without hard work and close partnerships,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Lee. “I want to thank the U.S. Attorney’s Office, IRS Criminal Investigation, the Albuquerque Police Department and the other law enforcement agencies that helped the FBI with this investigation. We’re not going to stop with these arrests. We’re going to hit the accused drug-traffickers where it hurts: their wallets. Our message to drug traffickers in New Mexico and elsewhere is crystal clear: we will bring you to justice no matter what it takes. And we will go after everything you made or used when you broke the law.”

“The most effective way to dismantle sophisticated drug trafficking organizations is to pool the talents and resources of Federal and State law enforcement. IRS-CI is proud to contribute the financial investigators and expertise that is critical in analyzing the financial transactions and locating the money” said IRS Acting Special Agent in Charge Grchan.

“The Albuquerque Police Department has been working on this case collectively with the FBI and other local, state and Federal agencies for almost a year,” said Chief Schultz of the Albuquerque Police Department. “This has been a very complex case crossing state lines requiring hundreds of hours of investigative time. We are proud of the work that today is resulting in these arrests and seizures of assets. New Mexico Law Enforcement will continue to work together in an effort to keep our community safe and free from these types of organized groups of criminals.”

The defendants face the following maximum potential sentences if convicted: not less than ten years and not more than life in prison and a \$10 million fine on the cocaine distribution conspiracy; 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine on the marijuana trafficking conspiracy; 20 years of imprisonment and a \$500,000 fine on each of the money laundering charges; and four years and a \$250,000 for each of the “phone counts.” Charges in indictments are only accusations. All criminal defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

This case was investigated by the FBI, IRS Criminal Investigation and the Albuquerque Police Department, with assistance from the DEA, the HIDTA Region I Narcotics Task Force and the Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Office, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Joel R. Meyers. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Stephen R. Kotz and Cynthia L. Weisman are responsible for litigating the related civil asset forfeiture actions. Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Marshals Service and the New Mexico State Police assisted in Friday’s law enforcement operations.

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