



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

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October 22, 2009

**FOUR ALLEGED ASSOCIATES OF THE LA FAMILIA CARTEL ARRESTED IN AUSTIN
IN CONNECTION WITH PROJECT CORONADO**

*Arrests part of two-day nationwide roundup of
La Familia Drug Trafficking Organization members and associates*

John E. Murphy, Acting United States Attorney, Drug Enforcement Administration Assistant Special Agent in Charge Mark R. Harper and Austin Police Chief Art Acevedo announced that in Austin, federal, state and local authorities have arrested four individuals in connection with Project Coronado, a 44-month-long investigation targeting the drug trafficking activities of the La Familia Cartel.

Adriel Maldonado-Jiminez (a.k.a. Erick Maldonado), age 22, of Pflugerville, Texas; Diane Bernabe-Tinajero, age 21, of Austin; Isidoro Gonzalez, Jr., age 29, of Austin; and, Javier Benitez Torres, age 30, of Pflugerville, were arrested yesterday by members of the DEA's Austin Task Force. Authorities are still looking for a fifth defendant, 31-year-old Jose Israel Maldonado of Austin. All five are charged by federal criminal complaint with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine. Upon conviction, each defendant faces up to life in federal prison.

According to the affidavit in support of the criminal complaint, the defendants, under the direction of Jose Maldonado, conspired together from April 2008 until September 2009 to commit money laundering and distribute multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine in Austin as well as in Florida, North Carolina and Maryland. The affidavit also alleges that the defendants transported their cocaine and drug proceeds by shipping them via Fed Ex.

During this investigation, law enforcement authorities have seized approximately 30 kilograms of cocaine, approximately \$350,000 in United States Currency and two handguns.

This case is being investigated by the DEA's Austin Task Force and the Austin Police Department with assistance from the Federal Bureau Investigation. The DEA's Austin Task Force is comprised of agents and officers from the DEA, IRS-Criminal Investigation, Austin Police Department, Round Rock Police Department, Pflugerville Police Department, Williamson County Sheriff's Office, Hays County Sheriff's Office, Bastrop County Sheriff's Office and the Texas Department of Public Safety. This case is being prosecuted for the government by Assistant United States Mark Marshall.

A criminal complaint is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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