



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

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**15 ARRESTED ON FEDERAL ORGANIZED CRIME/DRUG ENFORCEMENT TASK
FORCE INDICTMENT RETURNED IN SAN ANTONIO**

John E. Murphy, Acting United States Attorney, ICE Special Agent in Charge Jerry Robinette (San Antonio Division), DEA Acting Assistant Special Agent in Charge Mark Harper (San Antonio Division) and San Antonio Police Chief William McManus announced today the arrest of 15 members of the Martinez drug trafficking organization charged by a federal grand jury indictment with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine and more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana.

Those charged by indictment and arrested in San Antonio include: alleged ringleaders Jose Omar Martinez and Gerardo Martinez, age 32 and 28, respectively; Aron Theodore Haslett, 24; David Torres, 30; Celestino Gonzalez Torres, 26; Ashby Cowart, 25; and, Raul Cristobal Sanchez, 34. Authorities arrested six indicted defendants in Laredo, Texas, including: Edgar Gutierrez, 20; Francisco Espinosa, 26; Joe Jasso, 34; Ramiro Villa, Sr., 45; Gerardo Espinosa, 35; and, David Cabello, 35. Federal authorities in Chicago, IL, arrested Luis Molina, 42. Federal authorities in Cincinnati, Ohio, arrested Victor Monroe, 35. Upon conviction, each defendant faces between 10 years and life in federal prison.

The indictment also charges Jose Omar Martinez, Gerardo Martinez, Monroe, Sanchez, Haslett, Cabello, Cowart, Celestino, Torres, Jasso and Ramiro Villa, Sr., with conspiracy to commit money laundering.

The indictment alleges that since August 2008, the defendants conspired to conduct the affairs of a narcotics trafficking enterprise in West and South Texas as well as Southern Ohio and Northern Illinois. The indictment alleges that the defendants were responsible for the distribution of more than five kilograms of cocaine and more than one thousand kilograms of marijuana. The indictment further alleges the attempted transportation of a total of more than \$126,000 in drug distribution proceeds from Cincinnati, Ohio, to Jose and Gerardo Martinez in San Antonio.

In a related matter, authorities arrested 38-year-old Robin Cruz and his wife, 37-year-old Venecia Cruz, this morning at their San Antonio residence. While executing a state search warrant, authorities discovered approximately eight ounces of cocaine, between 50 and 100 pounds of marijuana, plus approximately one dozen assault weapons. Both are charged by a federal criminal complaint with possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance. Upon conviction, both face up to 20 years in federal prison.

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“This OCDETF investigation and prosecution is another illustration of the outstanding results which can be achieved when several law enforcement agencies collaborate in concerted efforts to combat drug trafficking,” stated John E. Murphy, Acting United States Attorney.

“This ICE-led investigation and today's arrests will deal a serious blow to this top drug trafficking organization based in south Texas with tentacles in Chicago and Cincinnati,” said John Morton, ICE Assistant Secretary. “Together with the DEA and the San Antonio Police Department, we seized large quantities of cocaine and marijuana, and hundreds of thousands of dollars in alleged illegal drug proceeds. We will continue to work to aggressively dismantle the criminal networks that profit from narcotics trafficking.”

“This year-long investigation, which was a cooperative effort between DEA, ICE, San Antonio PD and the Texas Department of Public Safety, has resulted in the arrests of numerous San Antonio and Laredo area cocaine and marijuana distributors who are part of a multi-state transportation cell based in south Texas. Co-conspirators in Chicago, IL and Cincinnati, Ohio, were identified during the investigation and arrested simultaneously in conjunction with the local arrests. These arrests will effectively impede this criminal organization’s ability to transport drugs through our city,” stated DEA Acting Assistant Special Agent in Charge Mark Harper.

“The benefits of working together with other state and federal agencies could not be more apparent. This joint initiative has yielded positive results towards our continued efforts at making our streets safer,” stated San Antonio Police Chief William McManus.

This case resulted from a joint Organized Crime / Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Drug Enforcement Administration, the San Antonio Police Department and the Texas Department of Public Safety Narcotics with assistance from various federal, state and local law enforcement personnel. Assistant United States Attorney Sam Ponder is prosecuting the case on behalf of the government.

An indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.

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