



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of Arkansas*

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**FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL OFFICIALS GATHER IN CONWAY
TO ANNOUNCE INDICTMENTS IN
TWO SEPARATE DRUG TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATIONS**

Little Rock – Jane W. Duke, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas; William J. Bryant, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Little Rock District Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); and Raymond R. Parmer, Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) office in New Orleans, Louisiana, announced today the arrests of multiple individuals as the result of federal indictments returned by a grand jury last week. In addition to Duke and Bryant, on hand in Conway, Arkansas today were numerous other federal, state, and local officials who participated in the investigations and arrests.

“Today’s arrests show what a force multiplier law enforcement becomes when agencies at all levels work together to achieve a common goal,” stated Duke. She added, “These Operations, both of which were designated as Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force or ‘OCDETF’ investigations, serve as blueprints for task force success. The results you see today would not have been attained without the participation of each and every agency involved.”

Bryant stated, “These Operations demonstrate the considerable benefit this state has gained through its inclusion in the Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). Many years of lobbying and hard work went into the effort to have Arkansas added to that HIDTA. And, in April 2008, that hard work paid off. Since becoming a member, Arkansas law enforcement has received invaluable training and investigative assistance from the Gulf Coast HIDTA. We are grateful for those much-needed resources. We are also extremely proud of the

commitment of our law enforcement partners who have chosen to join us in the HIDTA groups, both in central and northwest Arkansas.”

The highlighted indictments and arrests stem from two separate drug trafficking / immigration investigations referred to by authorities as “Operation Pied Piper” and “Operation Ice Princess.” Operation Pied Piper was initiated under the HSI nationwide umbrella investigation known as “Operation Vice Grip, ” which is an ongoing effort by HSI to address criminal aliens involved in drug trafficking. Operation Pied Piper was co-led by DEA and HSI and centered on drug trafficking by illegal aliens in the Conway, Arkansas area. Operation Ice Princess was a DEA-led investigation targeting a drug distribution organization principally operating in Jonesboro, Arkansas. In each investigation, thirteen individuals were indicted last week for conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. Each investigation also resulted in multiple individual indictments, for a total collective count of 40 defendants.

Operation Pied Piper

In February 2010, agents assigned to the DEA High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Group 62 initiated an investigation involving the drug distribution activities of Marcelino Ahumada-Vargas, also known as "Shorty." Investigation revealed that Ahumada-Vargas was a multi-ounce distributor of methamphetamine in the central Arkansas area and was based out of Conway, Arkansas. In April 2010, HIDTA Group 62 gained the assistance of state and local law enforcement agencies in a full-scale investigation into Ahumada-Vargas’ drug trafficking organization. From April 2010 through September 2010, investigators developed methamphetamine trafficking cases on multiple individuals responsible for distributing methamphetamine that was supplied by Ahumada-Vargas and other leaders in the organization. A number of these individuals had previously been convicted of felony offenses and had entered the United States illegally. During the investigation, law enforcement officials seized over 4 pounds of methamphetamine, which has an approximate street value of \$160,000. In addition, nearly \$16,000 in cash; 3 vehicles; and 8 firearms were seized from members of the Ahumada-Vargas organization. One of the seized firearms was a sawed-off shotgun.

On October 6, 2010, a grand jury for the Eastern District of Arkansas returned a 27-count indictment charging 13 individuals in the Ahumada-Vargas organization with conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, methamphetamine distribution, and unlawful re-entry to the United States after prior deportation. In addition to the 13 individuals charged in the October 6th conspiracy indictment, 7 other individuals were separately charged with federal offenses. These 7 individuals are alleged to have committed various offenses, including unlawful re-entry into the United States and distribution of methamphetamine.

Simultaneous with today’s Pied Piper arrests, officials executed six separate search warrants for various residences. Those search warrants yielded the recovery of 2 and ½ ounces of cocaine; 5 ounces of methamphetamine ice; and 12 guns, some of which were assault rifles. In addition, authorities seized over \$7,000 in United States currency. Four individuals were arrested on state charges stemming from the execution of these search warrants. A fifth

individual was taken into custody on false document charges. That individual is expected to be charged federally.

All defendants charged in connection with Operation Pied Piper/Operation Vice Grip are listed in the summary chart attached.

“Homeland Security Investigations is uniquely positioned to leverage its expertise in both drug smuggling investigations and immigration enforcement in order to disrupt and dismantle these types of criminal organizations,” said Parmer. “Operation Vice Grip provided an excellent opportunity to demonstrate our capabilities while partnering with other law enforcement agencies under the OCDETF umbrella. This Operation is noteworthy--not only for the significance of the violators apprehended--but also for the level of collaboration that led to its successful outcome.”

Numerous federal, state, and local agencies participated in Operation Pied Piper/Operation Vice Grip. These include:

The United States Attorney’s Office - Eastern District of Arkansas, Assistant United States Attorney Anne Gardner

The Drug Enforcement Administration - Little Rock District Office

Homeland Security Investigations

Immigration and Customs Enforcement - Enforcement Removal Operations

Conway Police Department

Faulkner County Sheriff’s Office

Conway County Sheriff’s Office

Morrilton Police Department

20th Judicial District Drug Task Force

20th Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney’s Office

15th Judicial District Drug Task Force

15th Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney’s Office

United States Marshals Service

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

Arkansas State Police

Arkansas National Guard

DEA Little Rock HIDTA Group 62 composed of the following agencies:

North Little Rock Police Department

Pulaski County Sheriff's Office

Arkansas State Police

Jefferson County Sheriff's Office

Benton Police Department

Operation Ice Princess

The Jasso-Arciniega drug trafficking organization, members of which were indicted as a result of Operation Ice Princess, was based in Jonesboro, Arkansas and had established distribution cells throughout the greater Independence, White, Faulkner, Craighead, and Van Buren county areas. The investigation began in April 2009, when Luis Jasso-Arciniega, also known as Hector Rivera Ortiz, and Martin Acuna Escobar were traveling through Missouri and were arrested as the result of a traffic stop in which 3 pounds of methamphetamine were found concealed within the vehicle. Jasso-Arciniega was subsequently identified as a member of a multi-state methamphetamine trafficking organization. Investigators determined that Jasso-Arciniega was the leader of a distribution cell operating between Kansas City, Kansas and central Arkansas and had made his brother, Bexabet Jasso-Arciniega, also known as "Bechi," a director of operations in Kansas City, Kansas. Jasso-Arciniega was taken into custody in April 2009. His brother had been arrested in the two months prior on an outstanding federal warrant. After these arrests, the brothers continued to direct the drug trafficking cell, appointing Osvaldo Duran, also known as "Panda," and another individual to run the Jonesboro, Arkansas operations.

According to authorities, the Jasso-Arciniega drug trafficking organization was involved in the distribution of multiple pounds of methamphetamine ice, as well as multi-kilogram quantities of powder cocaine. Investigation revealed that the group had direct ties to several towns in Mexico, including Milpas; Viejas; and Tecuala and that its sources of supply included various affiliates of the Gulf and Tijuana Mexican Drug Cartels. These Cartel affiliates also assisted the Jasso-Arciniega organization with transportation of the drugs into the continental United States from Mexico through entry points in Southern California and Southern Texas. From the spring of 2009 through the summer of 2010, the Jasso-Arciniega cell was successful in distributing multi-pound quantities of methamphetamine ice through distributors based in central Arkansas communities including, Jonesboro; Searcy; Kensett; Batesville; Rose Bud; Little Rock; and Conway.

On October 6, 2010, a grand jury for the Eastern District of Arkansas returned an 11-count indictment charging 13 individuals in the Jasso-Arciniega drug trafficking organization with conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, methamphetamine distribution, and unlawful re-

entry to the United States after prior deportation. The indictment alleges that beginning in or before April 2009 and continuing until October 5, 2010, the 13 named individuals conspired to distribute in excess of 500 grams of a mixture or substance containing methamphetamine. In addition to the 13 individuals charged in the October 6th conspiracy indictment, 7 other individuals were separately charged with federal offenses. These 7 individuals are alleged to have committed various offenses, including unlawful re-entry into the United States and distribution of methamphetamine.

During the investigation, law enforcement officers seized nearly 9 pounds of methamphetamine through various vehicle traffic stops, the execution of residential and business search warrants, and controlled deliveries. The street value of the seized methamphetamine totaled in excess of \$400,000. Money seizures associated with Operation Ice Princess yielded nearly \$150,000 during the course of the 18-month investigation.

All defendants charged in connection with Operation Ice Princess are listed in the summary chart attached.

Numerous federal, state, and local agencies participated in Operation Ice Princess. These include:

The United States Attorney's Office - Eastern District of Arkansas, Assistant United States Attorney Anne Gardner

The Drug Enforcement Administration - Little Rock District Office

Independence County Sheriff's Office

Jackson County Sheriff's Office

Craighead County Sheriff's Office

White County Sheriff's Office

Jonesboro Police Department

Searcy Police Department

20th Judicial District Drug Task Force

20th Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney's Office

16th Judicial District Drug Task Force

16th Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney's Office

2nd Judicial District Drug Task Force

2nd Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Central Arkansas Drug Task Force

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

The United States Marshals Service

Arkansas National Guard

Arkansas State Police

Arkansas Highway Police

DEA Little Rock HIDTA Group 61 composed of the following agencies:

The Federal Bureau of Investigation

The Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigations Division

Little Rock Police Department

Jacksonville Police Department

Pine Bluff Police Department

Arkansas Highway Police

The defendants are expected to begin making their initial appearances on these charges today before United States Magistrate Judge Beth Deere.

An indictment contains only allegations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

See attachment for individual defendants charged as a result of both Operations.

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Operation Pied Piper

Defendants:

MARCELINO AHUMADA VARGAS
aka "Shorty"

GILBERTO GARAY BADILLO

FABIAN GARAY BADILLO

MARIO HERNANDEZ HINOJOSA
aka Jorge VELETA RAMOS

JORGE RODRIGUEZ MORON
aka Abraham RAMOS
aka Anselmo RAMOS
aka Adrian RAMOS MORON

REGULO ARRIAGA NIETO

LUIS ALBERTO SAENZ DOMINGUEZ

OSCAR TORRES

REGINA LYNCH

OBIE M. BATTIE

MARIO ALBERTO RUGAMA, JR.

MARK QUATTLEBAUM

STRODY DONTIE WILSON

FABIAN ANAYA

ENRIQUE CORTEZ BERARANO

ALONZO GUTIERREZ HERNANDEZ

JAVIER OCTAVIO MORA

OMAR PADILLA

ISRAEL MARTEAL LOPEZ

COREY BATES

Operation Ice Princess

Defendants:

OSVALDO DURAN SANDOVAL
aka PANDA

JORGE MEDINA HERNANDEZ

LISBETH NATIVIDAD JASSO ARCINIEGA

[REDACTED]
aka [REDACTED]

LUIS ARCINIEGA JASSO
aka HECTOR RIVERA ORTIZ

MARTIN ACUNA ESCOBAR

ANIBAL JUAN RODRIGUEZ RUIZ

GREGORIO HERNANDEZ

GILBERTO FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ, JR.

KEISHA LEIGHANN BOYD

SHEILA LANDFAIR

ALFREDO HERNANDEZ BONILLA

ANTHONY GOODWIN

ISRAEL MARTINEZ

JENNIFER MELTON

LA SCHELLE ANNETTE PATTON

JULIO SILVA

ROGELIO SILVA

PEDRO LUX SABJIN

CARMELO DEL REAL