

NEWS RELEASE



***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney
Laura E. Duffy***

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For Immediate Release

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - June 7, 2012

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that Robert Mercado pled guilty today before United States Magistrate Judge Bernard G. Skomal to committing violent crime in aid of racketeering (VCAR) related to Mercado's participation in the Mexican Mafia. The Mexican Mafia is a prison gang that controls the criminal conduct of thousands of Hispanic street-gang members in Southern California, both in prison and on the streets. Mercado was a high-level associate for the Mexican Mafia.

Mercado's duties included the collection of "taxes," or extortion payments, from drug dealers under the control of the Mexican Mafia, as well as the distribution of drugs. In his plea agreement, Mercado admitted that he stabbed a heroin dealer in the course of his efforts to collect taxes from the dealer on behalf of the Mexican Mafia. In his plea, Mercado stated that the stabbing was the culmination of a series of threats made to the heroin dealer. The heroin dealer's injuries constituted a "serious bodily injury" that included an "acute laceration" to his leg.

This case is part of "Operation Carnalismo," an investigation conducted by the Violent Crime Task Force - Gang Group (VCTF-GG), a group of federal, state, and local law enforcement agents led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. United States Attorney Duffy praised the work of the VCTF-GG in marshaling the evidence related to Mercado's activities.

The plea is subject to final acceptance by United States District Judge Anthony J. Battaglia. Sentencing for Mercado is set for August 24, 2012 at 9:00 a.m., before Judge Battaglia.

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 12CR0290AJB

Robert Mercado

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1959 - Violent Crime in Aid of Racketeering
Maximum penalties: 20 years in prison

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
Chula Vista Police Department
San Diego County Sheriff's Department
National City Police Department
San Diego Police Department
San Diego County District Attorney's Office
U.S. Bureau of Prisons
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
San Diego County Probation
Department, Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations
Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations