



U.S. Department of Justice

**Ronald C. Machen Jr.**  
*United States Attorney for the  
District of Columbia*

*Judiciary Center  
555 Fourth St. N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20530*

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **For Information Contact:**

**Public Affairs**

(202) 252-6933

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### **MS-13 Member Sentenced to Life in Prison Plus 150 Years on Federal Racketeering Charges - Crimes Included Murder of One Victim, Maiming of Another -**

WASHINGTON - William Cordova, 26, also known as Centinella or Mario, was sentenced today to life in prison plus 150 years for his role in a series of crimes, including a murder, committed by the MS-13 gang in the Washington, D.C. area in 2006 and 2007.

The sentence, on federal racketeering charges, was announced by U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr., John P. Torres, Special Agent in Charge of the Washington Office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

Cordova and two other men were convicted by a jury in December 2010. He was sentenced by the Honorable Judge Richard J. Leon in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia.

Jose Gutierrez, 22, also known as "Astuto" or "Marco," is to be sentenced on April 26, 2011. Melvin Sorto, 24, also known as "Killer" or "Fantasma," is to be sentenced on April 27, 2011.

The men, all from the District of Columbia, were convicted of murder in aid of racketeering, conspiracy to commit murder in aid of racketeering, maiming in aid of racketeering, assaults with dangerous weapons in aid of racketeering, threats in aid of racketeering, first degree murder while armed, assaults with intent to kill and other related offenses.

Among other crimes, they were convicted of taking part in a conspiracy that culminated in the murder of Edwin Ventura, 18, on April 22, 2007.

All told, Cordova was convicted of 19 counts. Gutierrez was convicted of 16 counts, and Sorto was convicted of nine counts.

At trial, the government presented evidence of the defendants' membership in a criminal organization known as La Mara Salvatrucha, also known as MS-13. The government presented evidence of a conspiracy by the defendants and the MS-13 organization to commit numerous violent crimes in aid of racketeering activity. The evidence included crimes of assaults, threats, maiming, extortion, witness intimidation, assaults with intent to kill and the murder of all rival gang members and persons that threatened the MS-13 enterprise.

In reaching their verdicts, the jury found Cordova guilty of the assaults with a dangerous weapon in aid of racketeering of Dennis Diaz-Gutierrez, Josue Levia, and Jhosimar Alvarez-Torrez, on July 30, 2006, in Alexandria, Virginia. The victims were shot numerous times as they sat inside a car at a traffic light.

In addition, the jury found Cordova, Gutierrez, and Sorto guilty of the murder of Ventura and the assault with intent to kill of Nelson Maldonado, on April 22, 2007, in the 2900 block of Sherman Avenue NW, Washington D.C. The victims were shot numerous times in retaliation for an ongoing feud with MS-13 members.

Cordova and Gutierrez were also convicted of the maiming and assault with intent to kill of Feliciano Flores-Esquina Flores, on June 1, 2007, in the 3000 block of Georgia Avenue NW, Washington D.C. The victim was shot two times in the head as she stood at a bus stop.

The jury also found all three defendants guilty of numerous local District of Columbia related offenses.

"MS-13 has spread fear and violence across state and national borders, but it is no match for coordinated law enforcement," said U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. "Today William Cordova joined a long line of MS-13 members who will spend their entire lives behind bars in federal prison. The people of Washington, D.C. are safer as a result of his incarceration."

"Today's sentence sends a clear message that gang violence and all of its accompanying destructive activities will not be tolerated," said Special Agent in Charge John P. Torres of ICE's Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Washington field office. "HSI is committed to enhancing the public safety of the residents in the National Capitol Region by attacking and dismantling transnational gangs such as MS-13."

"The sentencing today should put gang members on notice that law enforcement partners are working together to uproot violent criminals from our communities and put them in jail where they belong," said Cathy L. Lanier, Chief of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD).

The prosecution is the result of an investigation initiated by the United States Attorney's Office, ICE Homeland Security Investigations, MPD, the Capitol Area Regional Fugitive Task Force, the City of Alexandria Police Department, and the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

This sentence comes the same month that the U.S. Attorney's Office obtained convictions of four members of a violent drug conspiracy for an August 2008 murder, secured a 45-year sentence for a leader of the Congress Park Crew, and indicted thirteen men involved in a violent

rivalry between two crews in the Benning Terrace area. These prosecutions mark a concentrated effort by law enforcement to focus resources on combating gang violence, including through the creation of a dedicated Gang Unit in the Homicide Section of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

In announcing the sentence, U.S. Attorney Machen, Special Agent in Charge Torres and Chief Lanier praised the efforts of the many people who worked on this case, including ICE Homeland Security Investigations Special Agents from the Washington, D.C. Field office, ICE HSI Attaché's office in El Salvador, and MPD Homicide Detectives Jed D. Worrell, Jacqueline Middleton, and Eduardo Voysest. They also recognized the work of MPD Detective Eddie Vazquez of the Capitol Area Regional Fugitive Task Force, MPD Detectives Emilio Martinez and Elba Longo, MPD Officers Eliseo Medina and Luciano Morales, and the DEA's Special Agent who worked on the case.

They also acknowledged the work of United States Attorney's Office support personnel Yvonne Bryant, Katina Adams, Dawn Tolson-Hightower, Michael Hailey, David Foster, Eric Urschel and Brendan Tracz. Finally, they praised Assistant United States Attorneys Gilberto Guerrero Jr., and Nihar Mohanty who investigated and prosecuted the case.

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