



Department of Justice

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GUILTY VERDICTS IN MEXICAN COCAINE CARTEL TRIAL

Evidence Showed Atlanta Cartel Operations Distributed 4,000 Kilograms of Cocaine from 2002 to 2005

Atlanta, GA - A jury in federal district court has returned guilty verdicts against JESUS HECTOR FLORES, 38, of Laredo, Texas, and JOE LOUIS LOPEZ, 40, of Dallas, Texas. The jury found FLORES and LOPEZ guilty on all counts of the indictment, which included four counts of cocaine trafficking and on two counts of possessing guns in furtherance of the drug conspiracy.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, "This verdict is another message to the Mexican cartels who use metro Atlanta as a center of operations for distributing cocaine in the United States, that we will not tolerate this criminal activity. We will prosecute and convict not only those who work in Atlanta on behalf of the cartels, but also will reach into Texas and Mexico to arrest and bring the cartel leaders to justice."

Rodney G. Benson, Special Agent in Charge of the DEA Atlanta Field Division said of the guilty verdict, "The Mexican cartels are being put on notice that the United States will not tolerate their continued efforts to deliver copious quantities of cocaine in the Atlanta area. These drugs pose a clear and present danger to our nation and we will be unrelenting in our efforts to bring them to justice."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the evidence presented at trial: FLORES served as the intermediary between the metro Atlanta distribution operations and a cocaine cartel based in Mexico, and he managed the cartel's Atlanta activities from his home in Laredo, Texas. LOPEZ and others distributed the cocaine to the cartel's customers in metro Atlanta and picked up the cash paid by the customers. The cartel sent approximately 100 kilograms of cocaine on a weekly basis during the summer and fall of 2005, all of which traveled on tractor trailer trucks to Atlanta after crossing the border at Laredo. Witnesses testified that some truckloads carried as much as 300 kilograms of cocaine. The cocaine was stored at two "stash houses" located at 52 Johnson Road and 5040 Erin Road, both in Fulton County.

In addition, the cartel's operatives collected money at the stash houses, which then was transported back to Mexico via tractor trailer trucks. The evidence showed that the truckloads of money typically contained several million dollars in cash.

DEA agents began monitoring wiretaps of the defendants' telephones in June 2005, and intercepted several truckloads of cocaine and money during the investigation. During the trial, a Georgia State Patrol officer explained how he seized \$2.5 million in cash from one tractor trailer truck, and agents displayed photos of 120 kilograms of cocaine, semiautomatic guns, and another \$1.5 million discovered at the Erin Road stash house in connection with the November 15, 2005, arrests.

The evidence showed that FLORES also distributed cocaine in Memphis, Tennessee. In total, the operation distributed approximately 4,000 kilograms of cocaine in Georgia and Tennessee from 2002 to 2005. After the extensive DEA wiretap and field investigation, FLORES and LOPEZ both were arrested on November 15, 2005.

FLORES AND LOPEZ could receive a maximum sentence of life in prison and fines of up to \$4,000,000. A sentencing date has not yet been scheduled before United States District Judge William S. Duffey, Jr.

In addition to FLORES and LOPEZ, eight other defendants have entered guilty pleas to the two indictments that arose from this wiretap case, named "Operation Multiplicity." These defendants include ROMERO ROEL MARTINEZ, 29, of Laredo, Texas; LUIS TREVINO, 29, of Laredo, Texas; ROBERTO GARCIA, 31, of Laredo, Texas; FLORENTINO VILLANUEVA-CASTILLO, 29, of Tamaulipas, Mexico; GUADALUPE BARAJAS-VALENCIA, 34, of Michoacan, Mexico; MANUEL CORONADO-ESPINDOLA, 42, of Michoacan, Mexico; SERGIO FIGUEROA-LEYVA, 53, of Guerrero, Mexico, and ADELIA BELTRAN-CARDENAS, 43, of Mexico. Three other defendants remain fugitives. Sentencings of the defendants who entered pleas also have not been scheduled.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration, as well as officers of the Gwinnett County Drug Task Force, Clayton County Police Department, Georgia State Police, Fulton County Police Department, DeKalb County Sheriff's Office, Forsyth County Sheriff's Office, and the Bureau of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement.

Assistant United States Attorney John Horn is prosecuting the case.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta recommends parents and children learn about the dangers of drugs at the following web site: www.justthinktwice.com.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.