



Department of Justice

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“OPERATION SHOOTING STAR” RESULTS **IN THREE DOZEN PRISON SENTENCES**

Ledgers of Drug Co-Conspirators Showed \$190 Million in Drug Proceeds in Only 10 Months

ATLANTA, GA - After convicting four defendants during two separate trials and accepting guilty pleas from 36 other defendants, United States District Judge Charles A. Pannell has imposed sentence on all but one defendant in the two-year prosecution resulting from the David G. Wilhelm OCDETF Strike Force’s investigation named “Operation Shooting Star.” The latest sentence, handed down today, was a 300-month federal prison sentence for JULIO CESAR AVALOS-CERPAS, 35, from Mexico, for his role as a leader of a distribution “cell”. The sentences that Judge Pannell imposed on the other defendants ranged from 16 months to life in prison. There is no parole in the federal system.

Acting United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates, “These forty convictions show the results that are achieved when federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies work together to stem the flow of poison into this country and to stop the cross-border flow of cash to violent, greed-driven cartel members in Mexico.”

According to Acting United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: Between November 2006 and December 2007, members of a large, sophisticated cocaine trafficking organization linked to Mexican drug cartels used the metro Atlanta area as the transshipment point for more than 7,000 kilograms of cocaine.

Seized ledgers showed that during this period, organization members collected at least \$193,129,208 in drug proceeds in the Atlanta area, transported those funds through the Southeastern United States, and smuggled them across the United States/Mexico border to pay cartel leaders in charge of operations. During the course of the investigation, agents intercepted telephone calls over approximately 53 telephones; searched at least 30 locations; and seized more than \$10 million in cash, 383 kilograms of cocaine, and 30 firearms, including assault rifles, shotguns, and handguns with 30-round

magazines.

Judge Pannell imposed the following sentences today and over the past 11 months:

DEFENDANT	AGE	PRISON TERM	SUPERVISED RELEASE
Manuel Magana-Sagrero	37	Life	10 years
Jose Magana-Zavala	34	384 months	10 years
Angel Haro-Perez	29	324 months	5 years
Kevin Jimenez-Castillo	35	324 months	5 years
Joaquin Suarez-Flores	30	304 months	5 years
Julio Cesar Avalos Cerpas	34	300 months	5 years
Julian Ortuna-Herrera	26	292 months	5 years
Jose Macias-Martinez	49	292 months	5 years
Jose Tapia-Corneso	41	288 months	5 years
Hector Vargas-Madrigal	47	262 months	10 years
J. Jesus Torres-Ochoa	39	262 months	10 years
Jose Mendoza-Solorzano	23	235 months	5 years
Jose Jesus Espinoza Faria	25	248 months	5 years
Leopoldo Castanda-Herrera	42	248 months	5 years
Arturo Torres-Zaragoza	25	248 months	5 years
Francisco Vega-Santana	38	235 months	5 years
Salvador Gonzalez-Flores	22	216 months	5 years
Damian Lopez-Gonzalez	24	211 months	5 years
Mario Alberto Guerrero-Martinez	35	195 months	5 years
Marco Antonio Rodriguez-Magana	36	188 months	5 years
Aurelio Chavez Maldonado	25	188 months	5 years
Eneyda Romero-Molina	40	181 months	5 year
Jose Luis Benitez-Tornes	30	168 months	5 years
Ramiro Ochoa Penalzoa	39	168 months	5 years
Alejandro Gutierrez-Beiza	30	151 months	5 years
Antero Pineda-Camacho	51	151 months	5 years
Jesus Garcia-Corona	27	149 months	5 years
Raul Amado Luna-Mejia	23	144 months	5 years
Alfonso Rodriguez Franco	49	144 months	5 years
Martin Magana-Bernal	37	121 months	5 years
Roberto Espinoza-Cerda	29	120 months	5 years
Nahu Barajas-Duarte	29	97 months	5 years
Juan Aguiar-Martinez	33	97 months	5 years
Felipe Santana	30	63 months	2 year

DEFENDANT	AGE	PRISON TERM	SUPERVISED RELEASE
Victor Gonzalez-Flores	20	60 months	3 years
Fausto Villa-Mojica	51	48 months	1 year
Carlos Alberto Gutierrez	22	46 months	3 years
Abraham Mayor	27	27 months	3 years
Lorenzo Pineda-Ibarra	38	16 months	3 years

Defendants JUAN ANTONIO RAMOS-SANCHEZ, JORGE LUIS CORDERO-PENA, JOSE EMMANUEL GUADARRAMA, OPHELIA PINEDA, AND FNU LNU, a/k/a “LICENCIADO,” remain fugitives.

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.

The agents who investigated this case are assigned to the David G. Wilhelm OCDETF Strike Force and are employed by the following law enforcement agencies: the Drug Enforcement Administration, Internal Revenue Service; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement; United States Marshals Service, Georgia Department of Corrections, Fayette County Sheriff’s Office, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, DeKalb County Police Department, Georgia State Board of Pardons and Paroles, and Fayette County Sheriff’s Office. Significant assistance in this case was provided by the Georgia State Patrol.

Assistant United States Attorneys Elizabeth M. Hathaway and Jenny Turner prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, Acting 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.