



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates
Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

02/03/11

<http://www.justice.gov/usao/gan/>

CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

"OPERATION FOUR HORSEMEN" RESULTS IN SIGNIFICANT FUNDS GOING BACK TO LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Millions Seized in Major Drug Case; 5 Agencies To Share \$8 Million

ATLANTA, GA - In a brief presentation at DEA Atlanta today, millions of dollars in seized assets from the two-year investigation code-named "Operation Four Horsemen" were distributed to law enforcement agencies who contributed time, hours and efforts in the case. The investigation was led by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and coordinated through the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates, whose office coordinated the transfer of the forfeited funds, said, "This is one of the largest drug and money cases in this district in recent history. The law enforcement officers working this case seized over \$23 million in cash which was on its way back to Mexico to fuel the cartels. By taking money out of the pockets of the cartels and putting it into our local law enforcement, we can help provide the resources necessary for our local law enforcement agencies to fight an international threat. Our partnership with the state and local counterparts is critical to effective law enforcement in this district."

DEA Atlanta Field Division Special Agent In Charge Rodney G. Benson said, "This investigation further reveals that the greater Atlanta area has become the hub of operations for Mexican cartel groups who seek to destroy lives by distributing a multitude of illegal drugs in the Eastern United States. The seizure of large sums of U.S. Currency from this organization severely disrupted its operations. Today's sharing of these forfeited funds are a direct result of the great working relationship that DEA continues to have with its federal, state and local counterparts."

Lawrenceville Police Chief Randy Johnson said, "The result of this multi-year and multi-agency operation confirms our suspicions that Georgia has become a hub for drug traffic operations. It is imperative for police organizations to understand drug trafficking patterns and work together to combat the traffic and the problems that evolve there from. The drug problem knows no city limits, state lines, or international borders. I am proud to

have my agency work with the Federal Government in task force efforts to combat this problem.”

Henry County Sheriff Keith McBrayer said, “I wish to commend the inter-agency community and our law enforcement state, federal and local partners for their significant interdiction efforts in the Operation Four Horsemen investigation. The Henry County Sheriff's Office is pleased to have been part of this major drug interdiction effort that will protect countless lives from the dangers of drug abuse, trafficking, and production. These arrests and seizures have taken apart a major drug organization. I am confident that the dedicated men and women of this task force will continue to have a critical impact on interdicting drug trafficking in Henry County and well beyond.”

GBI Director Vernan Keenan said, “The significance of this investigation serves as a wake- up call that Georgia is ground zero for east coast poly-drug Mexican cartels. These violent organized criminal enterprises destroy lives as they peddle their poisons throughout the eastern United States, acquiring market control and unimaginable illegal drug proceeds like those represented here.”

“The Georgia State Patrol works closely with federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies as a team in the ongoing task of drug interdiction,” said Colonel Bill Hitchens, Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Public Safety. “Participating agencies provide critical resources that together assist in the successful prosecution of those involved.”

Troup County Sheriff Donny Turner said, “The Troup County Sheriff's Office is grateful for the collaborative efforts of the DEA, ICE, the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia, the Georgia State Patrol, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, the Georgia Department of Public Safety and all other agencies along the I-85 corridor to suppress the trafficking of illegal drugs by those who attempt to contaminate the homes of our citizens and endanger neighborhoods along that route, throughout the State of Georgia. Whenever a successful traffic stop is executed, it is a win for the entire Law Enforcement community. By stopping the illicit movement of illegal narcotics, these agencies are saving lives!”

At today’s brief presentation, the following amounts were presented to the following law enforcement agencies:

- \$2,096,769.15 to the Lawrenceville Police Department
- \$1,223,115.34 to the Henry County Sheriff's Office
- \$1,223,115.34 to the Georgia Bureau of Investigation
- \$1,048,384.58 to the Georgia Department of Public Safety
- \$174,730.76 to the Troup County Sheriff's Office.

Beginning in mid-2007, the DEA initiated an investigation which ultimately uncovered two Mexico-based drug trafficking cells operating in the Atlanta area. The investigation revealed that the cells operated in a similar fashion, receiving multi-kilogram shipments of cocaine that arrived in tractor-trailers from Mexico. After the drug traffickers received the cocaine shipments, they shipped millions of dollars in U.S. currency back to Mexico by concealing the money in tractor-trailers and other vehicles. The Mexican-based importation, transportation, and distribution Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) spanned multiple states, and reported to command and control heads located within Mexico. The DTO co-inhabited the metropolitan areas of Atlanta, Laredo, McAllen, San Antonio, Greensboro, Raleigh, Newark, and Chicago.

The investigation revealed that Atlanta was the primary distribution point for the organization. The organization imported narcotics into the United States along strategic border points in Texas, and then transported and stored narcotics in Atlanta before distributing them in Atlanta and to other cities along the eastern coast. In addition, the group organized and collected large amounts of bulk narcotic proceeds and then coordinated transportation from Atlanta back to Mexico via tractor-trailer vehicles. Operation Four Horsemen is linked to what DEA identified as its highest level traffickers known as a Consolidated Priority Target (CPT).

During the Atlanta-based Operation Four Horsemen investigation, a total of \$23,834,407.00 in bulk U.S. currency and 567 kilograms of cocaine were seized, and 23 organization members were arrested.

Throughout the course of Operation Four Horsemen, DEA Atlanta passed several investigative leads to other DEA offices, including DEA Laredo and DEA San Antonio which resulted in the initiation of multiple investigations which led to the seizure of over 400 kilograms of cocaine, 1,445 kilograms of marijuana and approximately 7 million dollars in bulk U.S. currency in Texas. Operation Four Horsemen investigative leads and strategic intelligence was also passed to the DEA Mexico City Country Office where high ranking DTO command and control leaders continue to be identified and investigated in coordination with host country law enforcement officials.

The seizures of U.S. currency include the following:

- On September 3, 2008, \$1,040,120 in U.S. currency was seized pursuant to a traffic stop of a tractor-trailer on I-20 in Carroll County. The currency had been picked up in Atlanta and was destined for Mexico.
- On December 3, 2008, \$1,023,465 in U.S. currency was seized pursuant to a traffic stop of a tractor-trailer on I-20 in Carroll County. The currency had been picked up in Atlanta and was destined for Mexico.

- On December 7, 2008, \$8,824,950 in U.S. currency was seized pursuant to a traffic stop of a tractor-trailer on I-85 in Troup County. The currency had been picked up in North Fulton County and was destined for Mexico.
- On January 22, 2009, \$4,754,159 in U.S. currency was seized pursuant to a traffic stop of a vehicle on I-75 in Henry County. The currency had been picked up at the Mall of Georgia and was destined for Mexico.
- On July 7, 2009, agents seized \$51,400 in U.S. currency during the execution of a search warrant on a single-family residence located at 2971 Hollow Mill Lane in Buford.
- On August 4, 2009, agents seized \$5,241,180 in U.S. currency which was concealed inside a bus parked outside a hotel on Paces Ferry Road in the Vinings area. The money was believed to be destined for Mexico. On the same date, agents seized \$179,978 in U.S. currency during the execution of a search warrant on a single-family residence located at 1290 Beeblossom Trail in Lawrenceville.

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 case was investigated by Special Agents of the DEA, with valuable assistance by the Georgia State Patrol, Lawrenceville Police Department, the Henry County Sheriff's Department, and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI). Further assistance was provided by the Troup County Sheriff's Office.

Assistant United States Attorneys Michael Herskowitz and Jeffrey Viscomi prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact Sally Quillian Yates, 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.