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TWENTY DEFENDANTS, INCLUDING FIVE ALLEGEDLY TIED TO THE ZETAS CARTEL, INDICTED ON FEDERAL NARCOTICS CHARGES

CHICAGO — Twenty defendants are facing federal narcotics charges here, including five alleged members of a Chicago-based cell of the Zetas Mexican drug cartel who were responsible for transporting millions of dollars in drug proceeds between Chicago and Mexico, federal law enforcement officials announced today. A joint investigation led by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Federal Bureau of Investigation resulted in the charges, as well as accumulated seizures during 2010 of more than \$12.4 million cash and approximately 250 kilograms of cocaine in the Chicago area. An additional \$480,000 cash and two kilograms of heroin were seized yesterday.

Federal agents yesterday executed simultaneous arrests in the Chicago area and in Laredo, Tex., of defendants stemming from the multi-jurisdiction investigation of drug-trafficking and the flow of its narcotics proceeds. Twelve of the 20 defendants indicted in Chicago were arrested in Chicago and a 13th in Laredo.

The 20 Chicago defendants were charged in five separate indictments that were returned by a federal grand jury on Nov. 2 and unsealed following the arrests. The 12 Chicago defendants

arrested here yesterday appeared in U.S. District Court and remain in federal custody pending detention hearings. Five defendants remain fugitives; one was already in federal custody and another is hospitalized.

Yesterday's seizures of cash and heroin occurred during the arrests and execution of search warrants at the residence of one defendant in Bellwood and another defendant's residence in Bolingbrook, as well as a safe deposit box.

All 20 Chicago defendants were charged with various narcotics offenses, including conspiracy to possess and distribute quantities of cocaine and using a telephone to facilitate narcotics trafficking. The five alleged members of the money transportation cell were also charged with conspiracy to transfer narcotics proceeds outside the United States. If convicted, 12 defendants face a mandatory minimum of 10 years to a maximum of life in prison and a \$10 million fine, while the remaining eight defendants face a mandatory minimum of 5 years to a maximum of 40 years in prison and a \$5 million fine. The money transportation conspiracy carries a maximum of 20 years in prison and fine of twice the value of the money involved. If convicted, the Court must impose a reasonable sentence under federal statutes and the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

“One indictment in this group signals the first federal prosecution in Chicago of defendants allegedly tied to the Zetas drug-trafficking cartel, and the seizures of cash represented a significant blow to the operation of this alleged money transportation cell,” said Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. He praised the dedication and teamwork of the local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in Chicago that worked tirelessly to disrupt these alleged drug-trafficking conspiracies.

Mr. Fitzgerald announced the charges together with Jack Riley, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration; Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Gary J. Hartwig, Special Agent-in-Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Chicago; Alvin Patton, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division in Chicago; and Garry F. McCarthy, Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department.

"DEA's commitment to hitting alleged drug trafficking organizations from all angles is especially evident when you consider the impact of the seizure of over \$12 million in suspected drug proceeds. In the specific indictment that alleges affiliation of some of the defendants with the Zetas, the influence of Mexican criminal organizations in the wholesale Chicago drug market is apparent. The severing of those ties is of the utmost importance to the DEA," Mr. Riley said.

Mr. Grant said: "The extensive cash seizures made during the course of this investigation illustrates how lucrative the illicit drug trade can be. Combined with the apparent presence of the Zetas in the Chicago area, the charges announced today should serve as a wake-up call to law enforcement throughout the state."

The prosecutions were coordinated with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Texas, and federal prosecutors in the Western District of Texas also assisted in the investigation. The Illinois Attorney General's Office conducted a separate but related investigation that resulted in the arrest of eight defendants on state narcotics charges last week in Galesburg, Ill. The federal investigation was conducted under the umbrella of the U.S. Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) and the Chicago High-Intensity Drug-Trafficking Area Task Force (HIDTA).

One indictment alleges that defendant **Eduardo Trevino**, a fugitive believed to reside in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico, directed a money transportation network for the Zetas from Nuevo Laredo, and that this network coordinated the transfer of money from places such as Chicago to Laredo, and then from Laredo to Mexico. At the direction of the Zetas, defendant **Salvador Estrada** allegedly collected, processed and concealed cash from the sale of drugs so that the narcotics proceeds could be transported by truck drivers, including defendants **Miguel Arredondo** and **Vicente Casares**, from Chicago to Laredo, knowing that the proceeds would be transported to the Zetas in Mexico. Defendant **Juan Aguirre** allegedly worked with the others to coordinate the delivery of cash proceeds to truck drivers.

Estrada allegedly identified and maintained safe houses where drug proceeds were secretly collected, packaged and concealed, such as 1241 South Wenonah Ave., Berwyn, and 3800 West 24th St., Chicago.

According to the indictment, the following seizures, totaling \$12,452,685, were made during the course of the investigation:

- ▶ \$9,428,950, from the 24th Street stash house on April 30, 2010;
- ▶ \$2,000,010, also on April 30, 2010;
- ▶ \$999,310, on May 27, 2010; and
- ▶ \$24,415, on Dec. 18, 2010, along with a Mosberg 100 ATR .308 rifle and a Colt .22 semi-automatic handgun.

The 14-count indictment against Trevino and the five alleged Chicago cell members seeks forfeiture of approximately \$13 million, including the \$12.45 million seized previously. Five of the six (named above) were charged with conspiracy to transport narcotics proceeds outside the United

States. Together with defendant, **Aureliano Montoya-Pena**, all six were charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine and various other narcotics offenses.

The other four indictments charge the remaining 14 defendants with various narcotics distribution offenses.

The government is being represented by Assistant United States Attorneys William Ridgway, Gregory Deis and Heather McShain.

The public is reminded that indictments contain only charges and are not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

A list of the federal defendants follows (with best known ages and residences in Chicago unless noted otherwise):

<u>CASE NO.</u>	<u>DEFENDANT</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>TOWN</u>	<u>STATUS</u>
11 CR 784	Eduardo Trevino	unknown	Mexico	Fugitive
	Salvador Estrada	38	Brookfield/ Berwyn	Fugitive
	Miguel Arredondo	46		Arrested
	Juan Aguirre	42	Melrose Park	Arrested
	Vicente Casares	49		Arrested
	Aureliana Montoya-Pena	43		Fugitive
11 CR 782	Jesus Maria Carreno-Lechuga	37	Berwyn	Fugitive
	Julio Morales-Soto	26	Bolingbrook	Arrested
	Antonio Quezada	24	Northlake	Arrested
	Miguel Angel Hernandez	21	Melrose Park	Fugitive
	Alejandro Kader	38	Bellwood/ Franklin Park	Arrested
	Carlos Aaron Nevarez-Diaz	22	Schaumburg	Arrested
	Evaristo Martinez-Zamaniego	28	Plainfield/ Cicero	Arrested

11 CR 785	Manuel Estrada Alvaro Torres-Estrada	unknown 26	Brookfield Brookfield	Arrested Arrested
11 CR 786	Abel Galindo Herrera Noel Cano David Aguirre	39 34	Lansing Hammond	Arrested
11 CR 783	David Aguirre Adrian Herrera Margarito Lechuga	(See above) 33/34 45	Brookfield Berwyn	Arrested Arrested

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