



**United States Department of Justice  
United States Attorney's Office  
District of Minnesota**

**B. Todd Jones,  
United States Attorney**

**Jeanne F. Cooney  
Director of Community Relations  
(612) 664-5611  
email: [jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov](mailto:jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov)**

# **News Release**

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## **15 individuals indicted as a result of Operation Pitchfork**

A year-long law enforcement investigation, known as Operation Pitchfork, which targeted area drug trafficking operations, resulted in the recent filings of three federal indictments that charged a total of 15 individuals. The indictments were unsealed following the initial court appearances of several of the defendants.

In the first indictment, filed on February 24, 2011, 13 individuals were charged with offenses related to a methamphetamine operation that functioned in Minnesota between 2008 and February of 2011. Abel Rios Abriz, age unknown; Rigoberto Busto-Magaran, age 31; Yonibel Bustos-Valle, age unknown; Juan Manuel Charollamora, age 22; Luis A. Mendoza-Cabrera, age unknown; Jose Hernandez-Bustos, age 40; Porfirio Talavera-Blanco, age 41; and Andres Vasquez-Avila, age unknown, all of St. Paul, along with Esteban Sanchez Diaz, age 41; and Rene Correa Sanchez, age 29; both of Minneapolis, as well as Jessica Lynn Nelson, age 27, of Shakopee; Trevor James Ryan, age 28, of Moose Lake; and Miguel Farid Soto-Chavez, age 24, address unknown, were charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. In addition, eight defendants were charged with actual distribution of the drug: Busto-Magaran was charged with ten counts; Vasquez-Avila, six counts; Soto-Chavez, four counts; Mendoza-Cabrera, Abriz, Bustos-Valle, and Hernandez-Bustos, two counts each; and Charollamora and Talavera-Blanco, one count each. Charollamora, Nelson, and Ryan also were charged with one count of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

The indictment alleges that from 2008 through February 23, 2011, the 13 defendants conspired to distribute 50 or more grams of methamphetamine. It also alleges that five or more grams of methamphetamine were distributed by—

- \* Busto-Magaran and Soto-Chavez on February 5, 2010;
- \* Vasquez-Avila on February 19, 2010;
- \* Busto-Magaran and Soto-Chavez on March 3, 2010;

- \* Mendoza-Cabrera and Vasquez-Avila on March 10, 2010;
- \* Vasquez-Avila on March 18, 2010;
- \* Mendoza-Cabrera and Vasquez-Avila on March 31, 2010;
- \* Busto-Magaran and Soto-Chavez on March 31, 2010;
- \* Abriz and Vasquez-Avila on April 22, 2010;
- \* Abriz and Vasquez-Avila on April 28, 2010;
- \* Charollamora on June 2, 2010;
- \* Busto-Magaran and Hernandez-Bustos on June 15, 2010;
- \* Busto-Magaran and Hernandez-Bustos on July 6, 2010;
- \* Bustos-Valle on August 19 and September 10, 2010;
- \* Busto-Magaran on September 24, 2010;
- \* Busto-Magaran and Hernandez-Bustos on October 19, 2010, and on January 29, 2011;

and,  
Busto-Magaran and Talavera-Blanco on February 23, 2011.

In addition, the indictment alleges that on June 2, 2010, Nelson and Ryan possessed with intent to distribute five or more grams of methamphetamine; while on July 23, 2010, Charollamora possessed with intent to distribute five or more grams of methamphetamine. Moreover, it alleges that on April 20, 2010, Busto-Magaran and Soto-Chavez distributed 50 or more grams of methamphetamine

If convicted, the defendants face a potential maximum penalty of life in prison on the conspiracy charge, 40 years on each distribution count, and 40 years on each possession with intent to distribute count. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

In the second indictment, which was filed on February 24, 2011, a 35-year-old man is charged with conspiring to distribute 50 or more grams of methamphetamine last summer. Luis Alfonso Perez-Robles, address unknown, was charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, one count of distribution of methamphetamine, and one count of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

The indictment alleges that from August 31 through September 9, 2010, Perez-Robles conspired with others to distribute the drug. In addition, on August 31, Perez-Robles distributed 50 or more grams of methamphetamine, and on September 9, he possessed with intent to distribute an additional 50 or more grams of methamphetamine.

According to a law enforcement affidavit filed in the case, on September 9, 2010, Perez-Robles was stopped on U.S. Highway 52 for a traffic violation. During a consent search of his vehicle, officers found approximately one pound of methamphetamine concealed in a plastic bag under the front passenger seat. He was immediately arrested.

At the time of his arrest, Perez-Robles was awaiting sentencing in the District of Minnesota on a cocaine conspiracy charge. In connection to that charge, Perez-Robles was sentenced on September 14, 2010, to 70 months in prison. If convicted in the present case, Perez-Robles faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison on each charge. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

During the investigation, Miguel Angel Soto-Pina, age 49, of St. Paul, was identified as an associate of Busto-Magaran. Sota-Pina was indicted on February 24, 2011, on one count of

illegal re-entry after deportation. His indictment alleges that on June 11, 2010, he was found in the U.S. illegally after having been previously deported to Mexico. His deportation followed a 2009 Minnesota conviction for first-degree sale of a controlled substance. If convicted, Soto-Pina faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge. In addition, after serving any sentence imposed, Soto-Pina will be deported.

The investigations in these cases were conducted by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the St. Paul Police Department, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office, the Bloomington Police Department, the Minnesota State Patrol, and the Sherburne County Sheriff's Office, with assistance from the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The investigations occurred in California and Minnesota. So far, 13 people have been arrested, and authorities have seized nearly two pounds of methamphetamine, approximately \$350,000 in cash, two handguns, and a vehicle.

All three of these cases are being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas M. Hollenhorst.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.

