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**UNITED STATES CHARGES OPERATIONAL CHIEF AND
ASSOCIATES OF VIOLENT MEXICAN DRUG CARTEL**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and MICHELE M. LEONHART, the Acting Administrator of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced the unsealing of two Indictments yesterday charging four members and associates of La Familia Michoacana, a violent and heavily armed drug cartel in Michoacan, Mexico, with participating in conspiracies to import and distribute large quantities of methamphetamine and cocaine into the United States from Mexico. On April 15, 2009, the President designated La Familia as a significant foreign narcotics trafficking organization under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act.

According to the Indictments, La Familia Michoacana ("La Familia") is a violent and heavily armed drug trafficking cartel based in the state of Michoacan, in the southwestern region of Mexico. La Familia controls drug manufacturing and distribution within and around Michoacan, including the importation of vast quantities of cocaine and methamphetamine from Mexico to the United States. La Familia is philosophically opposed to the sale of methamphetamine to Mexicans, and instead supports its export to the United States for consumption by Americans. La Familia has used violent means to support its drug-trafficking activities, including assaults, killings, and kidnappings. In addition, La Familia associates based within the United States have acquired military-grade weapons, including assault weapons, and ammunition to be smuggled back into Mexico for use by La Familia.

The Indictment unsealed yesterday in U.S. v. Servando Gomez-Martinez (the "Gomez-Martinez Indictment") charges SERVANDO

GOMEZ-MARTINEZ, a/k/a "La Tuta," who serves as the operational chief for La Familia and who has made public statements on behalf of the cartel, with conspiring to import and distribute cocaine and methamphetamine into the United States from Mexico.

According to the Gomez-Martinez Indictment, GOMEZ-MARTINEZ, among other things, is responsible for ensuring that La Familia's drug trafficking activities are not impeded by law enforcement, and also for acquiring weapons for use by the cartel. The Indictment alleges that, on July 17, 2009, a few days after the bodies of twelve murdered Mexican federal law enforcement officers were discovered following the arrest of a different La Familia leader, GOMEZ-MARTINEZ made a recorded statement to a local television station in Michoacan, in which he publicly acknowledged that he was a member of La Familia, and, among other things, stated that La Familia was in a battle against the Mexican federal police and prosecutors. GOMEZ-MARTINEZ further stated that La Familia kidnaps people who owe La Familia money, as well as those whose family members work in state and federal governments in Mexico.

The Indictment unsealed yesterday in U.S. v. Rigoberto Renteria-Andrade, et al., charges three defendants, RIGOBERTO RENTERIA-ANDRADE, a/k/a "Rigoberto Andrade-Renteria," a/k/a "Rigo," IGNACIO RENTERIA-ANDRADE, a/k/a "Ignacio Renteria-Andrade," a/k/a "Nacho," a/k/a "El Cenizo," and JUAN LUIS PALOMINOS-SEPULVEDA, with conspiring to import and distribute cocaine and methamphetamine into and within the United States from Mexico. The Indictment also charges PALOMINOS-SEPULVEDA with possessing firearms in furtherance of the narcotics conspiracy. RIGOBERTO RENTERIA-ANDRADE and IGNACIO RENTERIA-ANDRADE were responsible for arranging the shipments of cocaine and methamphetamine from La Familia in Mexico into the United States. PALOMINOS-SEPULVEDA is alleged to have been responsible for receiving and guarding these drug shipments at a stash location inside the United States, acquiring military-grade weapons and ammunition to send to Mexico to La Familia members in Mexico, and making drug deliveries as directed within the United States. In that capacity, PALOMINOS-SEPULVEDA is alleged to have possessed four AK-47 rifles, two M-16 assault rifles, two Desert Eagle .50 caliber pistols, one .45 caliber pistol, and approximately 1,000 rounds of ammunition, all of which he was intending to smuggle back to La Familia for use in Mexico.

The narcotics conspiracy charges against GOMEZ-MARTINEZ, RIGOBERTO RENTERIA-ANDRADE, IGNACIO RENTERIA-ANDRADE, and PALOMINOS-SEPULVEDA carry a maximum sentence of life in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison.

The firearms charge against PALOMINOS-SEPULVEDA carries a mandatory minimum consecutive sentence of 5 years in prison and a maximum sentence of life in prison.

The case against SERVANDO GOMEZ-MARTINEZ has been assigned to United States District Judge JOHN G. KOELTL. The case against RIGOBERTO RENTERIA-ANDRADE, IGNACIO RENTERIA-ANDRADE, and JUAN LUIS PALOMINOS-SEPULVEDA, has been assigned to United States District Judge DENNY CHIN.

"As alleged in the Indictments, La Familia is a collection of ruthless drug dealers who kidnap and kill to support their narcotics trade. Armed to the teeth, this cartel poses a particular threat to our country. Among those we have charged today is alleged drug kingpin Servando Gomez-Martinez, effectively the chief operating officer of La Familia. We are pleased to join with so many fellow U.S. Attorneys' offices and law enforcement agencies in the vitally important effort of bringing members of La Familia to justice," said United States Attorney, PREET BHARARA.

"This organization, the newest of Mexican cartels, is directly responsible for a vast majority of the methamphetamine pouring into our country across our Southwest Border, and has had a hand in fueling the cycle of violence that is wracking Mexico today," said DEA Acting Administrator MICHELE M. LEONHART. "DEA, along with our U.S. and Mexican partners, is committed to strategically attacking the international and domestic drug trade with every tool at our disposal, and defeating those that thrive on the suffering of others."

The Indictments unsealed yesterday were part of a larger multi-agency law enforcement investigation known as "Project Coronado." The investigative efforts in Project Coronado were coordinated by the multi-agency Special Operations Division, comprised of agents and analysts from the DEA; Federal Bureau of Investigation; U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement; Internal Revenue Service; U.S. Customs and Border Protection; U.S. Marshals Service; and Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; as well as attorneys from the Criminal Division's Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section. More than 300 federal, state, local, and foreign law enforcement agencies contributed investigative and prosecutorial resources to Project Coronado through the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force.

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work by and coordination between law enforcement agencies across the country

and in Mexico, including DEA's offices in Mexico City, New York, Carlsbad (San Diego Field Division), Riverside (Los Angeles Field Division), and the Special Operations Division, as well as Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Control in San Ysidro and Otay Mesa, the California Highway Patrol, the San Diego Police Department, and the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department.

Assistant United States Attorney EUGENE INGOGLIA is in charge of the prosecution, which is being handled by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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