



Department of Justice

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JURY CONVICTS RESTAURANT OWNER OF HEROIN TRAFFICKING

COLUMBUS – A United States District Court jury here convicted Ericka Ryan, 44, of Hilliard of conspiracy to distribute more than 100 grams of heroin, aiding and abetting drug trafficking, and using a telephone to facilitate drug trafficking after a trial that began January 11. She is the 13th person convicted as a result of the indictment of 18 people for heroin trafficking in February 2009.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Anthony C. Marotta, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Franklin County Sheriff Jim Karnes; Madison County Sheriff James P. Sabin; Fayette County Sheriff Vernon P. Stanforth; and Grove City Police Chief Joseph Wise announced the verdict returned today after a trial before U.S. District Judge Edmund A. Sargus Jr.

During the trial, the government presented six witnesses who testified that Ryan, who operated the El Cora restaurant in west Columbus, assisted the leader of the conspiracy, David Gonzalez Rendon, in trafficking heroin from the time she bought the restaurant in August 2008 until she was arrested on February 26, 2009. Evidence showed that Rendon actually owned the restaurant, even though Ryan was listed as the owner.

Further evidence showed that Ryan worked at the restaurant as a manager and on one occasion at the restaurant she received \$4,000 from Rendon which she gave to another of his employees for the purchase of more than one kilogram of heroin for Rendon to sell in the Central Ohio area.

Ryan faces a minimum mandatory sentence of five years and up to 40 years imprisonment. Judge Sargus will set a date for sentencing.

The leader of the organization, David Gonzalez Rendon, pleaded guilty on November 12, 2009 to conspiracy to distribute more than a kilogram of heroin. He faces a sentence of at least ten years and the possibility of life imprisonment. No date for his sentencing is set.

Four people charged in February 2009 are still fugitives. Charges against the 18th defendant are pending.

Stewart commended the cooperative investigation by DEA agents, sheriff's deputies and police officers who investigated the case, as well as Assistant U.S. Attorney Tim Prichard, who prosecuted the case.

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