

U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration
DALLAS FIELD DIVISION
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www.dea.gov



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NEWS RELEASE

DEA-LED OPERATION PUMA CAGES SOUTHWEST BORDER DRUG RING

***Locally, Operation Puma Has Seized 277 Kilograms of Cocaine,
900 Pounds of Marijuana, and Nearly \$2,500,000 in U.S. Currency***

AUGUST 16 – DALLAS, TX --- The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Texas today announced the culmination of ***Operation Puma***, a multi-jurisdictional investigation that targeted an international drug trafficking and money laundering organization, to date, responsible for smuggling over 2,450 kilograms of cocaine and over 33 metric tons of marijuana across the U.S. - Mexico border.

Operation Puma, a 2 ½ year long DEA-led investigation which targeted both the drug distribution cells and the money laundering network of a sophisticated criminal enterprise operating along the Texas border with Mexico, today resulted in the arrest of 30 individuals, the execution of 19 search warrants, and the seizure of several million dollars in drug-related assets in Dallas, McAllen, Laredo, and San Antonio, Texas. The DEA teamed up with international, federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to dismantle an organization which had distribution cells that ranged from the southwest border to cities throughout the United States.

“This investigation, now known as Operation Puma, began here in the Dallas Division Office more than two and a half years ago,” said James L. Capra, Special Agent in Charge of the Dallas Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration. “As the investigation progressed, it became evident that the tentacles of this drug trafficking enterprise spanned both national and international territories. As criminal members were identified, the scope and magnitude of this organization’s destructive powers became apparent. We knew that the mission to dismantle this criminal enterprise would be immense and tedious but one that we could accomplish with fostered law enforcement partnerships both in our own backyard and abroad. Today, we stand should-to-shoulder with our law enforcement partners to announce the successful completion of this investigation. We are proud to have not only dismantled this international drug trafficking organization, but to have erased the stronghold it has had on so many of our communities.”

Richard B. Roper, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas, said, "Today's arrests are the direct result of the unprecedented, cooperative efforts of federal and state law enforcement throughout the State of Texas. Actions speak louder than words, and the overwhelming success of this OCDETF investigation, as shown by the number of drug traffickers arrested and seizures made, shows that dismantling major drug organizations continues to be a priority of the Department of Justice."

In the Northern District of Texas, **Operation Puma** has resulted in the arrest of 20 individuals, the seizure of 277 kilograms of cocaine, 900 pounds of marijuana, and nearly \$2,500,000 in US Currency. An indictment, partially unsealed today in the Northern District of Texas, charges multiple defendants with conspiracy, drug trafficking and money laundering offenses, and seek to forfeit to the United States millions of dollars in cash obtained through drug trafficking and property bought or used by the organization to conduct their illegal drug trafficking activity.

Included in the list of defendants charged for their alleged role in the drug trafficking enterprise investigated in **Operation Puma** is Sergio Maldonado of McKinney, Texas, who was the leader of a Gulf Cartel cell, based in North Texas.

The investigation uncovered various smuggling and concealment methods used by various cells to transport drugs north and illegal proceeds south.

Operation Puma indictments in the Northern District of Texas and elsewhere have targeted all levels of a multi-million dollar criminal organization, to include alleged members of the command and control structure, the money laundering components, and the street level dealers.

These arrests mark the conclusion of an international and multi-jurisdictional operation that was coordinated by the DEA's Special Operations Division (SOD) based in Washington, D.C. **Operation Puma** was a joint investigation involving DEA offices in Dallas, McAllen, Laredo, and San Antonio, TX, and the associated U.S. Attorney's Offices of the U.S. Department of Justice. Key local and state participants included the Dallas Police Department, the McKinney Police Department, the Garland Police Department, the Plano Police Department, the Kaufman County Sheriff's Office, the McAllen Police Department, the Mission Police Department, the San Juan Police Department, the Weslaco Police Department, the Pharr Police Department, the San Antonio Police Department, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the U. S. Marshal's Service, and the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

Photos available at www.dea.gov

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