



Department of Justice

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Western District of Texas

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FOUR ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH EL PASO-BASED COCAINE DISTRIBUTION AND MONEY LAUNDERING OPERATION

Federal and state authorities have arrested four individuals in connection with a cocaine distribution and money laundering conspiracy based in El Paso announced United States Attorney Robert Pitman and Immigration and Customs Enforcement-Homeland Security Investigations (ICE-HSI) Acting Special Agent in Charge Dennis Ulrich.

A two-count federal grand jury indictment, returned on July 18, 2012, and unsealed today, charges 39-year-old Hugo Ambriz of El Paso; 24-year-old Roberto Lara of El Paso; 25-year-old Jesus Cabrales of Northlake, Illinois; and, 28-year-old Martha Marquez-Avalos of El Paso, with one count each of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine and conspiracy to commit money laundering.

The indictment alleges that from August 2009 to February 14, 2012, the defendants conspired to possess with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine. Furthermore, the indictment alleges that from February 2010 to March 14, 2011, the defendants conspired to launder their drug proceeds. According to the indictment, defendants Ambriz directed other defendants to smuggle and transport illegal drugs to various cities across the United States, then return to El Paso with drug distribution proceeds for subsequent transportation and delivery to Ciudad Juarez. The indictment specifically identifies approximately \$560,000 in drug proceeds attributed to this organization that was transported from Chicago, Illinois, to El Paso. During this investigation, authorities have seized \$125,000 and over eight kilograms of cocaine.

All four defendants were arrested yesterday--Ambriz, Lara and Marquez-Avalos in El Paso; Cabrales in Chicago. Upon conviction of the drug conspiracy charge, the defendants face between ten years and life in federal prison; money laundering conspiracy charge, up to 20 years in federal prison.

This case resulted from an investigation by ICE-HSI. Both the Drug Enforcement Administration and the El Paso County Sheriff's Office assisted in making the arrests.

An indictment is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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