U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas

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FEDERAL AGENTS ARREST FORMER EL PASO BUSINESSMAN INDICTED IN AMMUNITION SMUGGLING SCHEME

United States Attorney Robert Pitman and Acting ICE-HSI Special Agent in Charge Dennis A. Ulrich announced the arrest this morning 48-year-old Hector Ayala, former owner of Uniforms of Texas, in connection with a scheme to smuggle ammunition and other prohibited items into the Republic of Mexico.

A federal grand jury indictment–returned last Wednesday and unsealed today–charges Ayala with two counts of facilitating the smuggling of goods from the United States; two counts of illegally exporting ballistic vests and high capacity magazines without a license; and, two counts of money laundering.

The indictment alleges that from September 1, 2009, to December 3, 2011, Ayala concealed and facilitated the transportation of multiple calibers and quantities of ammunition; approximately 300 high capacity ammunition magazines and drums; and, approximately 800 ballistic vests with ceramic plates knowing that the items were intended to be exported from the United States into Mexico. The indictment also alleges that during that same time period, Ayala conducted financial transactions with proceeds derived from the sale of ammunition, magazines and ballistic vests. On multiple occasions, Ayala structured cash transactions in amounts under $10,000 in order to avoid financial reporting requirements.

Ayala is scheduled to have his initial appearance at 2:30 today before United States Magistrate Judge Robert F. Castaneda. Upon conviction, Ayala faces up to 20 years imprisonment on each of the money laundering charges; up to ten years imprisonment on each of the remaining charges.

The case is being investigated by agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Homeland Security Investigations (ICE-HSI) together with the assistance of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Assistant United States Attorney Greg McDonald is prosecuting the case on behalf of the Government.

It is important to note that an indictment is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of guilt. The defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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