



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

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**MIDLAND/ODESSA BASED BARRIO AZTECA MEMBER
SENTENCED TO LIFE IN FEDERAL PRISON**

United States Attorney Robert Pitman announced that in Midland earlier today, Barrio Azteca member 41-year-old Carlos Hernandez was sentenced to life in federal prison on federal drug and racketeering charges.

On February 22, 2012, a federal jury convicted Hernandez of one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine as well as marijuana; one count of violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) statute; and, one count of conspiracy to violate the RICO statute. Today, United States District Judge Robert Junell sentenced Hernandez to life imprisonment on the drug charge, plus 324 months imprisonment on each the RICO charges to run concurrent.

Co-defendants Santos Almanza, Miguel Nieto, Ramon Morales, Marcus Calderon, Venessa Rico Flores, Federico Dunn, San Juan Barboza-Rodriguez, Stephen Corona, Juan Cortez and Benito Gonzalez have already been convicted and sentenced to federal prison in this case. Prison terms range from 33 months to life. Co-defendant Christopher Gilbertson is scheduled to be sentenced at 10:00am tomorrow before Judge Junell.

Testimony during their trial in February 2012 revealed that since January 2006, the defendants have conspired to carry out the mission of the BA criminal organization through a pattern of smuggling and distributing cocaine and marijuana, robbery, extortion, as well as violence and intimidation in and around the Midland-Odessa area. Testimony also revealed that Hernandez and other co-defendants each agreed to commit at least two acts of racketeering activity while conducting the affairs of the criminal organization. In addition to drug distribution, the racketeering activity included a series of home invasion robberies in the Midland area.

“These sentences send a strong message to gang members who engage in drug trafficking and related acts of violence and intimidation that their illegal activities will not be tolerated,” stated Joseph M. Arabit, Special Agent in Charge of DEA-El Paso Division.

This case is being investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration together with the Midland Police Department and the Midland County Sheriff's Office. Assistant United States Attorneys John Klassen and Mark Roomberg prosecuted this case on behalf of the Government.

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