



Department of Justice

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ELBERT HIDALGO, 23, FACES A MAXIMUM LIFE SENTENCE FOR RACKETEERING

TAMPA - A member of the Latin Kings gang pleaded guilty in federal court Monday to one count of conspiring to conduct and participate in the activities of a racketeering enterprise.

He faces a maximum sentence of life in prison.

Elbert Hidalgo, 23 of Tampa, also known as "King Queso," was scheduled to stand trial Monday. Instead, he entered a guilty plea before U.S. Magistrate Judge Mark Pizzo. A sentencing date has not been set.

Court documents describe Hidalgo as a member of the Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation. Prosecutors say he is part of the Palmetto Tribe in West Tampa. He was previously a member of a Latin Kings tribe in the Queens borough of New York City, prosecutors said.

Hillsborough County jail records show that Hidalgo was arrested at his Bruce B. Downs Boulevard home in October 2006 on numerous charges. At the time, Tampa police charged him with possession of marijuana, drug trafficking, grand theft with a firearm, dealing in stolen property, possession of cocaine and conspiracy, among others.

A federal grand jury indictment followed in May.

According to Hidalgo's plea agreement, he conspired with other gang members to distribute illegal drugs, including cocaine and ecstasy. He also conspired to commit murders of rival gang members and fellow Latin Kings members who had violated the gang's rules, the agreement says.

In 2005, Hidalgo and three unnamed members of the Latin Kings fired guns at individuals in Tampa after receiving orders to do so from a higher-ranking gang member, court papers say. Hidalgo remains in jail.

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