



Department of Justice

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Federal Jury Finds Mexican Nationals Guilty of Large Cocaine Trafficking Conspiracy

LEXINGTON, Ky. – Two Mexican National men residing in Louisville, Kentucky were convicted of conspiracy to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine, after a three-day jury trial that concluded yesterday in the U.S. District Court in Lexington. Imanol Pineda Penaloza, 37, and Efrain Villa Villanueva, 24, were both found guilty of all charges. A third defendant, Sergio Aguilar Piedra, 25, had previously entered a guilty plea to the same drug-trafficking charge.

The proof at trial established that all three men participated in the conspiracy, which lasted from November 2015 until March 2018. In 2015, the Narcotics Enforcement Unit with the Lexington Police Department executed a search warrant at an address on Lonan Court, in Lexington, and seized nearly 19 kilograms of cocaine, approximately \$400,000 in U.S. currency, and two firearms. And, during 2016 and 2017, the defendants continued to distribute kilogram quantities of cocaine and other drugs, in Louisville, Kentucky.

Pineda and Villa are both scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Danny C. Reeves on August 24, 2018. Piedra is scheduled to be sentenced on August 17, 2018. Each man faces a minimum of 10 years in prison and up to life imprisonment.

“The jury found that the defendants distributed significant quantities of cocaine over a three-year period, and they now will face significant punishment for their criminality,” stated United States Attorney Robert M. Duncan, Jr. “I want to commend law enforcement for their work on this investigation. As a result of strong law enforcement cooperation and partnerships among federal and local law enforcement, the community has been made safer and these defendants are being held accountable.”

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Darrell Christopher Evans, Special Agent in Charge, DEA Louisville; and Lawrence Weathers, Chief of Police, Lexington-Fayette County Division of Police, jointly announced the verdict.

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. Attorney General Jeff Sessions reinvigorated PSN in 2017, as part of the Department's renewed focus on targeting violent criminals, directing all U.S. Attorney's Offices to work in partnership with federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and the local community to develop effective, local strategies to reduce violent crime.

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