

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

NORTH COUNTY MEXICAN MAFIA MEMBER PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - May 23, 2013

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that Rudy Espudo pled guilty today before United States District Judge Irma E. Gonzalez to three counts of a superseding indictment including:

- conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity (commonly known as RICO conspiracy);
- conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine; and
- knowingly and intentionally brandishing a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence and a drug-trafficking crime.

According to the superseding indictment handed up on August 2, 2012, Espudo is a validated member of the Mexican Mafia who oversaw their activities throughout much of northern San Diego County.

In his guilty plea, Espudo admitted to engaging in drug trafficking and extortion, as well as profiting from the criminal activity of those gang members who worked under his so-called protection. Espudo pledged to “protect” these criminals as long as they paid their “taxes” to the Mexican Mafia. Such taxes are essentially extortion payments made by gang members and drug dealers to a Mexican Mafia member for the right to conduct their illegal activity free from interference from the Mexican Mafia. In one example of a drug dealer who refused to make tax payments, Espudo admitted that he ordered the robbery of that person, which was committed with the use of a shotgun. Espudo also admitted that he had authority over several Mexican Mafia associates who assisted by collecting taxes on his behalf. Drug dealers who paid him taxes in this manner were responsible for distributing methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin and other drugs on the streets of San Diego County.

This case is part of "Operation Notorious County," an investigation led by the North County Regional Gang Task Force, a group of federal, state, and local law enforcement agents led by the San Diego County Sheriff's Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Operation Notorious County resulted in eight indictments in January 2012, charging fifty-one individuals with participating in a federal racketeering influenced and corrupt organization (RICO) conspiracy. United States Attorney Duffy praised the North County Regional Gang Task Force for the coordinated team effort in this investigation.

Espudo has been in custody since his arrest in January 2012. Judge Gonzalez set a sentencing hearing for Espudo for October 7, 2013.

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 12CR0236IEG

Rudy Espudo, aka Crazy

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(d) – Conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity; Title 21, United States Code, Section 841 -Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine; and Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(c) -Brandishing of a firearm in the commission of a crime of violence and a drug trafficking offense.

Maximum penalties: Life in prison

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

San Diego County Sheriff's Department
Federal Bureau of Investigation
Chula Vista Police Department
National City Police Department
San Diego Police Department
San Diego County District Attorney's Office
U.S. Bureau of Prisons
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
San Diego County Probation
Department, Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations
Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigations