

# ***NEWS RELEASE***



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## ***OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA***

***San Diego, California***

***United States Attorney  
Laura E. Duffy***

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***For Immediate Release***

### **MEXICAN MAFIA MEMBER SENTENCED FOR RACKETEERING CONSPIRACY** ***SAN DIEGO MAN LED EXTORTION & DRUG TRAFFICKING ENTERPRISE***

#### **NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY** – May 24, 2013

United States Attorney Laura E. Duffy announced that Mexican Mafia member Salvador Nicola Colabella was sentenced today by United States District Judge Anthony J. Battaglia to serve 262 months in federal prison based on his August 9, 2012 plea to RICO conspiracy charges, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(d). Colabella has been in custody since his arrest on January 25, 2012.

According to court documents, Colabella's role in the RICO conspiracy related to his participation in the Mexican Mafia, a violent, prison-based gang that controls the criminal conduct of thousands of Hispanic, street-gang members in Southern California. As revealed in his plea, Colabella controlled a significant portion of the criminal activity of Hispanic street-gang members in the San Diego area. Court records noted that while the Mexican Mafia has thousands of associates, membership is rare; in fact, law enforcement estimates that there are only about 150-200 Mexican Mafia members in the United States.

In his guilty plea, Colabella admitted to personally engaging in drug trafficking and extortion, as well as profiting from the criminal activity of those gang members who worked under his command. The extortion payments, or "taxes" in Mexican Mafia parlance, are collected by associates at the behest of members through violence and/or the threat of violence. In exchange for such "taxes," Mexican Mafia members essentially grant gang members and other associates the right to conduct criminal activity within their respective areas of influence. In fact, Colabella admitted in his plea agreement that he had authority over several Mexican Mafia associates who collected taxes on his behalf. Drug dealers who paid Colabella taxes were responsible for distributing hundreds of pounds of methamphetamine and other drugs worth millions of dollars on the streets of San Diego. In all, Colabella collected tens of thousands of dollars in "taxes," through the extortion of cash, cars, and other items of value. Colabella admitted in his plea

agreement that his associates resorted to violence in the course of extorting others. For example, one of Colabella's top associates stabbed a drug dealer over a dispute related to the drug dealer's payment of taxes. According to court records, while Colabella did not directly order the assault, the associate was only able to carry out the stabbing because of the authority granted to him by Colabella.

This case was the result of "Operation Carnalismo," a long-term investigation conducted by the Violent Crime Task Force - Gang Group (VCTF-GG), a group of federal, state, and local law enforcement agents led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In total, Operation Carnalismo resulted in charges against 36 individuals across five indictments. The indictments charged RICO conspiracy, violent crime in aid of racketeering, conspiracy to distribute drugs, and the distribution of drugs.

United States Attorney Duffy praised the work of the VCTF-GG in marshaling the evidence related to Colabella's activities. Duffy added, "Today's sentencing marks another significant step toward our office's effort to combat the dangerous criminal activity of gangs and, in particular, the Mexican Mafia. Gang members should take note: their organized criminal activity will not be tolerated, and we will continue to use the full resources of our office and our law enforcement partners to investigate and prosecute organized gang crime."

FBI Special Agent in Charge, Daphne Hearn stated, "Today's sentencing should send a message to all gang members that the FBI and our law enforcement partners will aggressively pursue you and hold you accountable for your criminal activities. San Diego is safer today because of the cooperative efforts between the public and law enforcement."

Chula Vista Police Chief David Bejarano said, "The Chula Vista Police Department appreciates the collective efforts made by our detective and members of the Violent Crimes Task Force to remove this dangerous individual from our community. The success of this investigation underscores the strength and benefits of the partnership that exists among Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies throughout the San Diego region."

National City Police Chief Manuel Rodriguez stated, "This operation spotlights the collaborative efforts of local, state, and federal agencies to combat violence in our community."

**DEFENDANT**

**Case Number: 12CR0290AJB**

Salvadore Nicola Colabella

**SUMMARY OF CHARGES AGAINST COLABELLA**

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(d) – Conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity

**INVESTIGATING AGENCIES**

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

**PROGRESS OF CASES CHARGED AS PART OF OPERATION CARNALISMO –  
CONVICTIONS AND SENTENCES**

**12CR290-AJB**

Salvadore Colabella – RICO conspiracy – 262 Months  
Jose Luis Mercado – RICO conspiracy - Sentencing June 28, 2013  
Robert Mercado – Violent Crime in Aid of Racketeering - 168 Months  
Maria De Jesus Claudia Ochoa– RICO conspiracy - Sentencing July 26, 2013  
Silvano Hernandez – RICO conspiracy - 210 Months  
Jose Briseno-Contreras – RICO conspiracy - 46 Months

**12CR291-AJB**

Ramon Agredano – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 84 Months  
Richard Cornejo – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 135 Months  
David York – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
Guillermo Chaidez – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
David Garcia – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
Adrian Dominguez – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 108 Months  
Charles Smith – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
Anna Sheneman – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 93 Months  
Esteban Rodriguez – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 60 Months

**12CR292-AJB**

Juan Guerrero – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 135 Months  
Jorge Moreno – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - Sentencing June 28, 2013  
Edward Moreno – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
Allen Mundell – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
Brett Youkel – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
Lacy McElroy – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 100 Months

**12CR293-AJB**

Alfredo Bazarro – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - Sentencing June 7, 2012  
Charles Monroe – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
Jose Pedro Covarrubias – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
George Chavez – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
Jose Esparza – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 130 Months  
John Atkinson – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 120 Months  
Annabel Vasquez – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 72 Months  
Fantajamarie Cajmere Deleal – Conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine - 77 Months