

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

Twenty-two People Charged in Ongoing “Operation Corridor” Investigation of North County Gang Activity

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - January 8, 2014

SAN DIEGO – Twenty-two people, including suspected drug traffickers and associates of the Mexican Mafia prison gang, are charged in numerous indictments and complaints unsealed today with crimes ranging from racketeering conspiracy to heroin and methamphetamine dealing.

The indictments are the result of “Operation Corridor,” a continuing investigation involving a team of federal, state, and local agencies focusing on the activities of the Mexican Mafia operating in the Southern District of California. So far the investigation has resulted in the charging of 68 people since April 2012.

In all, five indictments and three complaints were unsealed today. The main indictment charges 11 people with participating in a racketeering conspiracy that involved the commission of both state and federal crimes, including conspiracy to commit murder, assault with a deadly weapon, extortion, money laundering and drug trafficking violations.

The indictments were handed up by a federal grand jury in San Diego on December 19, 2013. As of today, 18 of the twenty-two defendants are either in federal or state custody. Six were arrested today and yesterday; the rest were already in custody.

As set forth in the indictments, most of the defendants are associates of the Mexican Mafia operating primarily in Oceanside and Vista, California, and multiple San Diego Sheriff's Office Detention Facilities and California State Prisons, including Donovan, Centinela and Ironwood.

Using electronic surveillance, intercepted phone lines and other sophisticated tools, this continuing investigation targeted a broad criminal conspiracy to extort money and control the illegal narcotics trade in both north San Diego County and various California State Prisons. The investigation is ongoing.

"We will continue to target gangs operating on the streets of our communities in conjunction with associates operating in jails and prisons," said U.S. Attorney Laura Duffy. "Their criminal behavior will not be tolerated. Along with our state and local partners, we will continue to tirelessly pursue them at every level. I commend the efforts of all involved and appreciate their hard work and commitment to bringing these criminals to justice."

United States Attorney Duffy praised the North County Regional Gang Task Force (NCRGTF) for the coordinated team effort in the culmination of this investigation. Agents and officers from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, San Diego County Sheriff's Office, Oceanside Police Department, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Bureau of Prisons, Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Marshals Service, California Highway Patrol, and the Escondido and Carlsbad Police Departments collaborated on this investigation.

The investigation was conducted in conjunction with the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force. The OCDETF program was created to consolidate and utilize all law enforcement resources in this country's battle against organized crime and major drug trafficking organizations.

"The collaboration between federal and local law enforcement in San Diego is unparalleled, and Operation Corridor is a fine example of utilizing our strategic law enforcement partnerships to combat an increasingly dangerous fusion of violent gangs and organized crime," said Derek Benner, special agent in charge for ICE's Homeland Security Investigations in San Diego. "With dozens of violent street gang members and associates off the streets, we have delivered on our commitment to public safety so that the law abiding people living and working in our neighborhoods are safe."

DEFENDANTS

Criminal Case No. 13CR4514-BEN

Leonard Delgado, aka Spanky
Steven Amador, aka Insane
Isaac Ballesteros, aka Lazy
Julio Rodriguez, aka Sniper
Roberto Sotelo, aka PoPo, Top Hat
Ruben Savala, aka Boxer
Robert Collazao, aka Weasel

George Garibay, aka Scooby
Rachel Morales, aka Rachel Ruvalcaba
Margaret Cano
Angelica Ibanez

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Conduct Enterprise Affairs Through a Pattern of Racketeering Activity, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(d) ; Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine and Heroin, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841 and 846. Maximum Penalties: Life in prison.

In addition to the RICO portion of “Operation Corridor,” 11 defendants were charged in six related cases for various drug trafficking and firearm offenses. Those cases and defendants include:

DEFENDANTS

Criminal Case No. 13CR4512-BEN

Luis Cuevas, aka Youngster
Helen Robles

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute Heroin. Maximum Penalties: 20 years in Custody and \$1 million fine.

DEFENDANTS

Criminal Case No. 13CR4513-BEN

Priscilla Lopez, aka Gata
Eva Madueno, aka Shady

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine and Heroin
Maximum Penalties: 40 years in Custody and \$5 million Fine

DEFENDANTS

Criminal Case No. 13CR4515-BEN

Juan Ybarra, aka Listo
Sherri Pelayo
Michael Vaughn

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine; Conspiracy to Launder Money. Maximum Penalties: Life in Custody and \$10 million fine.

DEFENDANT

Criminal Case No. 13CR4511-JLS

Hector Aguilar, aka Flaco

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Felon in Possession of a Firearm
Maximum Penalties: 10 years in Custody and \$250,000 fine

DEFENDANT

Criminal Case No. 14MJ0038

Kenneth Coleman, aka Lucky

Age: 35

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine and Heroin
Maximum Penalties: 20 years in Custody and \$1 million fine.

DEFENDANT

Criminal Case No. 14MJ0039

Ricardo Chavez, aka Droopy

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Possession of Methamphetamine with Intent to Distribute
Maximum Penalties: 20 years in Custody and \$1 million fine.

DEFENDANTS

Criminal Case No. 14MJ0038

Chayo Moreno

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Conspiracy to Distribute Methamphetamine; Maximum Penalties: 20 years in Custody and \$1 million Fine.

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

North County Regional Gang Task Force, which includes agents and investigators from:

Federal Bureau of Investigation

San Diego County Sheriff's Office

Oceanside Police Department

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation

Bureau of Prisons, Homeland Security Investigations

U.S. Marshals Service

California Highway Patrol

Escondido Police Department

Carlsbad Police Department

***An indictment or complaint itself is not evidence that the defendants committed the crimes charged. The defendants are presumed innocent until the Government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.**