



Department of Justice

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Man Illegally Residing in Lexington Sentenced to Nearly 30 Years for Drug Trafficking, Firearms, and Immigration Offenses

LEXINGTON, Ky. – Fernando Rafael Lara Salas, age 40, who had previously used the aliases of Jesus Ruiz Vega, Francisco Garcia and Cristobal Palacios Garcia, was sentenced today, to 353 months in prison, by U.S. District Judge Danny C. Reeves. In January, Lara Salas was tried and convicted of multiple offenses, including drug trafficking, firearms and immigration offenses. His drug trafficking convictions included conspiracy to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine, possession with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine, and possession with intent to distribute fentanyl, methamphetamine, and tramadol. Lara Salas' firearms convictions included possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime, possession of a firearm as a convicted felon, and possession of a firearm by an alien. Lara Salas was also convicted of unlawfully re-entering the United States after previously being deported for a felony drug offense.

Two co-defendants in the case, Jorge De Jesus Macias Pedroza and Nestor Barron, were also convicted and previously sentenced by Judge Reeves, to terms respective terms of imprisonment of 188 and 120 months. All three men will be required to serve 85% of their sentences.

The joint investigation by federal and state law enforcement into the drug trafficking activities of Lara Salas began in August 2016 and culminated with the execution of search warrants at Lara Salas' residence in Lexington and a cargo trailer located in a remote location in Franklin County. The search of Lara Salas' home resulted in the seizure of 6 kilograms of cocaine, more than 50 grams of methamphetamine, a

9 mm firearm and \$110,000 in U.S. currency. Evidence found in the cargo trailer revealed that Lara Salas and others utilized the trailer for the preparation of fentanyl for distribution. Agents located packaging material consistent with a kilogram quantity of a controlled substance. The packaging contained a residual amount of fentanyl, an extremely potent opioid. Also located in the trailer were five kilograms of tramadol, a Schedule IV controlled substance that is commonly used by drug traffickers as a cutting agent for fentanyl and heroin, and boxes of latex gloves. The investigation was a cooperative effort led by investigators with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); and the Lexington Police Department.

“Without the outstanding work of our law enforcements partners, this prosecution would not have been possible. Their efforts removed dangerous drugs from our streets, made our community safer, and saved lives. Prosecuting those who sell drugs in our community will continue to be a core priority of our Office,” said Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky.

United States Attorney Duncan; Darrell Christopher Evans, Special Agent in Charge, DEA Louisville; Kristoffer Cortex, Acting Assistant Field Office Director, ICE; and Lawrence Weathers, Chief of Police, Lexington-Fayette County Division of Police, jointly announced the sentence.

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