



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Northern District of Illinois*

Patrick J. Fitzgerald
United States Attorney

*Federal Building
219 South Dearborn Street, 5th Floor
Chicago, Illinois 60604
(312) 353-5300*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY APRIL 7, 2011
www.justice.gov/usao/iln

PRESS CONTACTS:
AUSA Andrew Porter (312) 353-5358
AUSA Nancy DePodesta (312) 353-4224
AUSA Tinos Diamantatos (312) 353-4317
Randall Samborn (312) 353-5318

**LATIN KINGS' NATIONWIDE LEADER, AUGUSTIN ZAMBRANO, AND THREE
OTHER HIGH-RANKING GANG MEMBERS CONVICTED OF RICO CONSPIRACY
AND RELATED CRIMES IN FEDERAL TRIAL**

CHICAGO — A federal jury late yesterday convicted the highest-ranking leader nationwide and three other high-ranking leaders of the Latin Kings street gang of racketeering conspiracy (RICO) and all other charges against them involving narcotics trafficking and related violence that plagued numerous neighborhoods on the city's north, south and west sides. From its origin and base in the west side Little Village community, the Latin Kings spread throughout Chicago and Illinois and established branches in other states, where local leaders acted with some autonomy but adhered to the rules and hierarchy of the Chicago gang, according to the evidence in the six-week federal trial. Among the defendants convicted was **Augustin Zambrano**, 51, identified at trial as the "Corona," making him the highest-ranking leader nationwide of the Almighty Latin King Nation and responsible for overseeing the illegal activities of all factions of the powerful street gang, which evidence showed has approximately 10,000 members in Illinois alone. Zambrano, also known as "Big Tino," "Tino," "Old Man," and "Viejo," and three co-defendants were found guilty of running a criminal enterprise to enrich themselves and others through drug-trafficking and preserving and

protecting their power, territory and revenue through acts of murder, attempted murder, assault with a dangerous weapon, extortion, and other acts of violence.

Zambrano is the highest-ranking leader of the Latin Kings to be convicted since Gustavo “Gino” Colon, who also holds the title of “Corona” and is serving a life sentence that was imposed in 2000 for running a continuing criminal enterprise.

All four trial defendants remain in federal custody and face potentially lengthy prison terms without parole. U.S. District Judge Charles Norgle scheduled sentencing for Zambrano on Aug. 23, and set sentencing for the other three defendants Aug. 24-26.

Also convicted of RICO conspiracy and other crimes were: **Vicente Garcia**, 33, identified at trial as the “Supreme Regional Inca,” who was in charge of all Latin Kings in Illinois; **Jose Guzman**, 34, identified at trial as a former “Nation Enforcer” in the 26th Street, or Little Village, faction; and **Alphonso Chavez**, 26, identified at trial as the “Inca,” or leader of the gang’s 31st and Drake faction.

“This verdict inflicts a serious blow to the to leaders of the Latin Kings,” said Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. “It demonstrates that the combined and coordinated efforts of federal, state and local law enforcement can assemble cases looking at disparate crimes — such as selling false identification documents in Little Village — and tie them all the way back to the gang leaders responsible for a broad array of criminal conduct.

Evidence at trial included audio and video recordings of three beatings inflicted upon gang members for violating the rules and testimony documenting 20 shootings in the Little Village area, including at least one in which the victim died. Zambrano and Garcia were both convicted of assault with a dangerous weapon.

The four trial defendants were among a total of 31 co-defendants who were indicted in September 2008 or charged in a superseding indictment in October 2009. Of those 31 defendants, 24 pleaded guilty, four were convicted at trial, and three remain fugitives. Three of the defendants who pleaded guilty testified as government witness at the trial.

The RICO conspiracy count included evidence that Zambrano and several co-defendants conspired to demand and receive payment from an organization illegally selling fraudulent immigration documents in Little Village by threatening, and actually engaging in, the use of force and violence against members of that organization unless the defendants received regular cash payments. Trial evidence proved federal charges that Latin Kings leaders extorted “street tax” from non-gang members, referred to as “miqueros,” who sold false identification documents.

As part of the RICO conspiracy, evidence also showed that defendants kept victims in fear of the gang and its leaders by enforcing what it referred to as an “SOS” — shoot on sight or smash on sight — order against Latin King members who cooperated with law enforcement in order to enforce the gang’s grip on the community and control over its members and associates.

Mr. Fitzgerald announced the verdict with Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Andrew L. Traver, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The Chicago Police Department, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Chicago, and the Cook County Sheriff’s Police also had significant roles in the investigation, which was conducted through the federal High Intensity Drug-Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force and under the umbrella of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF).

The trial and earlier guilty pleas showed that many of the defendants were leaders of the 24 sections that comprised the 26th Street Region in Little Village, who conspired in late 2007 to sell powder cocaine twice a month to fund the “Nation Box,” a kitty that the regional hierarchy used to purchase weapons and ammunition, and pay for funeral and attorney fees for fellow gang members. Located along 26th Street, a main east-west thoroughfare, the region is bounded roughly by Fairfield Avenue (east) to Millard Avenue (west), and 21st Street (north) to 33rd Street (south). The region’s 24 sections are typically named after a street or intersection, with each section having its own leadership and “soldiers,” ranging between approximately 20 and 100 gang members.

The RICO conspiracy count encompassed a pattern of illegal activity since 2000, including drug trafficking, extortion, obstruction of justice, witness tampering, murder, attempted murder, and solicitation to commit murder, and intimidation. Evidence of the RICO conspiracy also included proof that the defendants and their associates:

- ▶ conducted the gang’s affairs through a series of laws and policies, some of which were codified in a “constitution,” as well as a “manifesto,” and the “26th Street rules.” The laws included a three-page list of 25 rules establishing procedures for homicides, “security,” and the sale of counterfeit identification documents;
- ▶ attended regular meetings, known as “demos” — or, when held by Nation officers, “Nation demos” — at which they discussed, planned, and otherwise engaged in criminal activity, including violent crimes, narcotics distribution, and obstruction of justice;
- ▶ initiated members by causing them to endure physical assaults conducted by other members at various gang-related gatherings; and
- ▶ managed the procurement, transfer, use, concealment, and disposal of firearms and dangerous weapons to protect gang-related territory, personnel, and operations, and to deter, eliminate, and retaliate against competitors and other rival gangs and individuals.

The convictions resulted from sustained, coordinated investigations by multiple federal law enforcement agencies, working together with the Chicago Police Department and other state and local partners, to dismantle the hierarchy of the Latin Kings and other highly-organized, often violent, drug-trafficking Chicago street gangs. In late 2006, ATF agents led an investigation that resulted in federal drug trafficking and firearms charges against 38 Latin Kings members and associates. In 2008, the FBI led an investigation that resulted in state and federal charges against 40 Latin Kings members and associates, including a dozen of the Zambrano co-defendants. In total, more than 80 Latin Kings members and associates have faced state or federal charges since 2006 and, of those, approximately 65 have been convicted federally, with only a few fugitives still facing federal charges.

The RICO conspiracy, extortion conspiracy, and assault with a dangerous weapon counts each carry a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Garcia was convicted of using a firearm during a violent crime, which carries a mandatory minimum of 10 years in prison to a maximum of life. The various narcotics counts carry sentences ranging from a mandatory minimum 5 years to a maximum of life and a fine up to \$4 million. The Court must impose a reasonable sentence under the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Andrew Porter, Nancy DePodesta and Tinos Diamantatos.

###