



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Federal and Local Authorities "Crackdown" on the Hierarchy of the Mexican Mafia in San Antonio, 26 arrests

(San Antonio, TX) Special Agent in Charge James D. Craig with the Drug Enforcement Administration, United States Attorney Johnny Sutton and Bexar County Sheriff Ralph Lopez, announced the indictment against and the arrests of 26 San Antonio area residents, all of whom are alleged ranking members of the Texas Mexican Mafia and or associates, on federal drug, firearms and money laundering charges.

"These 26 defendants have made heroin trafficking and violence their way of life in the Mexican Mafia. Today they start paying the price. Not only can they no longer sell heroin and cocaine in our communities, but we are taking their dirty money and guns," stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

Those arrested during pre-dawn raids this morning include:

- Daniel Leza, aka "Gumby", age 49
- Mary Elena Flores, aka "Hela Flores", age 44
- Juan Valdez, aka "Fly", age 38
- Jesse Ramirez, aka "Chuy", age 32
- Fernando Espinoza, aka "Sweet Pea", age 37
- Sammy Garcia, aka "Spideman", age 36
- Roger Rodriguez, aka "Flaco" or "Pelon", age 34
- Steve Herrera, age 23
- Ricardo Saenz, aka "Cookie Monster", age 38
- Cleto Gonzalez, age 51
- Hortencia Flores, aka "Tencha", age 41
- George Estrada, aka "Primo", age 50
- David Merlo, age 44
- Rogelio Flores, aka "Boli", age 42
- Diana Flores Carrasco, aka Nancy Flores, or Terry Morin, aka "Terry Flores", age 41
- "Nancy Carrasco", age 38
- Edward Cisneros, age 31

The following eight defendants charged in this indictment were already in law enforcement custody



Deputy Chief Raymond Trevino, BCSO, U.S. Attorney Johnny sutton, Western District of Texas, Bexar County DA Susan D. Reed, SAC James D. Craig, DEA Houston Division, ASAC Javier F. Pena, DEA San Antonio RO, Sheriff Ralph Lopez, BCSO, and RAC Davy Aguilera, BATF

Mexican Mafia arrests

In a crackdown on suspected Texas Mexican Mafia gang members Thursday, authorities rounded up 25 of 28 people indicted on charges ranging from drug trafficking to conspiracy.

They include:



prior to today:

Photo courtesy of the San Antonio Express-News

Jimmy Zavala, aka "Panson" or "Gordo", age 35
Albert Delgado, age 23
Santos Yanez, aka "Puppet", age 39
Matilda Vallejo, age 56
Johnny Garcia – Esparza, aka "Gira", 44
Sylvia Gil, age 44
Alfredo Munoz, aka "Tiny", age 44
Daniel Valles, aka "Dirty Dog" or "Dog", age 40

"Today's takedown of the hierarchy of the Texas Mexican Mafia clearly demonstrates once again that law enforcement in this country remain focused and extremely successful in decimating drug criminal organizations," stated Special Agent in Charge James D. Craig. "We investigate these groups from top to bottom and DEA remains dedicated not only to making arrests, but also to seizing their ill gotten gains to financially cripple their criminal activities in the community."

A 33 count federal indictment, returned on Wednesday, alleges that for five years beginning in August 1999, the defendants conspired together to: 1) obtain large amounts of heroin and cocaine for further distribution and sale; 2) control the distribution of heroin and cocaine by restricting drug trafficking among non-Texas Mexican Mafia members to those who paid extortion fees or a "tax", 3) protect "Mexican Mafia authorized" drug distributors from robbery, violence and competition; and, 4) using violence in all forms and degrees to enforce the Texas Mexican Mafia drug distribution "tax". Upon conviction of the drug conspiracy charge, each defendant faces between 10 years and life in federal prison.

During the time of the conspiracy, authorities estimate that the organization was responsible for distributing over 150 kilograms of cocaine and over 30 kilograms of heroin. During the course of the investigation, agents also seized approximately 80 firearms and about 50,000 dollars in cash. The indictment also seeks a monetary judgment against the defendants, jointly and severally, in the amount of \$300,000.00, which represents the proceeds of their alleged illegal activities.

"In combating a criminal organization like the Mexican Mafia and other similar organizations, a combined effort by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies will always be successful. This latest effort proves that criminal conspiracies endanger all segments of society and only through effective partnerships can we stop their ill effects on our communities. Our community is well served by all of our efforts when safety of our citizens is of utmost importance. Coordination and cooperation always prove more effective than competition. In this our latest effort, criminal organizations are warned that our efforts are ongoing," stated Bexar County Sheriff Ralph Lopez.

The Mexican Mafia was formed in the early 1980's in the Texas prison system when predominantly Hispanic inmates banded together to protect themselves from predatory inmates during a period of turmoil and violence within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Over the years, the gang has focused its efforts to promote widespread criminal activity including narcotics trafficking, extortion and murder. Also known as "Mexikanemi" or "La Eme", the organization was the subject of a 1993 federal indictment, which resulted in the conviction of Heriberto "Herb" HUERTA, at that time president of the organization, and a number of his fellow gang members on drug charges. In 1998, another federal indictment resulted in the conviction of Robert "Beaver" PEREZ, a Mexican Mafia general, and 15 other fellow gang members for their pattern of racketeering activities to include six murders committed in 1994 and 1995 in San Antonio and eight murders allegedly committed by gang members in 1997. The 1997 homicides included the shotgun killing of five people at a residence on West French Place, during August 8, 1997.

This long term Organized Crime/Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation was coordinated and conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Task Force and the Bexar County Sheriff's Office with the support of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. The DEA Task Force is comprised of law enforcement officers from the Alamo Area Narcotics Task Force, San Antonio PD, Leon Valley PD, New Braunfels PD, Schertz PD, Seguin PD, Sheriff's Departments from Comal, Guadalupe and Kerr Counties, Kerrville Task Force and the Bexar County District Attorney's Office.

Assistant United States Attorney Joey Contreras is handling the prosecution of this case on behalf of the U.S. Government and the case will be prosecuted in the Western District of Texas at San Antonio.

An Indictment is an accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. Defendants are presumed innocent unless and until convicted through due process of law.