

Targeted News Service

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## **58 Alleged Members of Mexican Drug Organizations Indicted in SDTX**

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The U.S. Justice Department's Drug Enforcement Administration's Houston Field Office issued the following news release:

United States Attorney Jose Angel Moreno along with Zoran Yankovich, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration's Houston Division announced today the indictment of 58 alleged members of Mexican drug organizations responsible for smuggling drugs into the United States and transporting and delivering the contraband to various points within Texas, Georgia, Ohio, Illinois and North Carolina, transporting bulk cash proceeds south to Mexico and laundering the proceeds through the acquisition of Texas real estate.

The indictments are the result of long term, multi-agency Southern District of Texas (SDTX) Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigations conducted as part of "Project Deliverance," a national initiative targeting the transportation infrastructure of Mexican drug trafficking organizations with emphasis along the Southwest border.

U.S. Attorney Moreno was joined by Special Agent in Charge Zoran B. Yankovich of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Special Agent in Charge Rodney E. Clarke of the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CI), Acting Special Agent in Charge Mike Feinberg of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Houston office, L. C. Wilson, regional commander for the Texas Department of Public Safety, Major Bob Doguim of the Harris County Sheriff's Office and Michael Dirden, Assistant Chief of Police - Criminal Investigations Command for the Houston Police Department, representing the numerous federal, state and local agencies involved in the investigations throughout the district leading to today's charges. U. S. Attorney Moreno lauded their efforts which resulted in the return of seven indictments charging a total of 58 persons and culminating in the arrest of 32 of those charged including the Sullivan City, Texas, Chief of Police, accused of conspiring with members of a Mexican cell smuggling marijuana into the United States from Mexico, and the owner of Herrera Property & Investments and the New Millenium Developers LLC, accused of laundering millions of dollars in drug proceeds through the acquisition of more than 70 residential lots in Hidalgo County, Texas.

During the course of these OCDETF investigations, almost 600 kilograms of cocaine and 31,000 pounds of marijuana were seized along with almost \$5 million in alleged drug proceeds and several real properties. During yesterday's enforcement action, an additional \$1 million plus in alleged drug proceeds, four vehicles and five bank accounts were seized.

"Every day, federal, state and local law enforcement officers, at our borders and beyond, do battle against the illegal drug trade," said Moreno. "Project

Deliverance is the latest engagement in our ongoing struggle to confront and defeat the Mexican cartels. These arrests, seizures and prospective forfeitures further our goal to dismantle and disrupt their operations and hold them accountable."

"This operation underscores DEA's resolve to apply relentless pressure on Mexican Drug Cartels and dismantle their networks by selective and intentional targeting of their ever changing vulnerabilities," said Yankovich. "Through indictments and arrests of Cartels leadership, seizure of drugs, weapons, money and assets, DEA will continue to diminish their power and ability to do their illicit business."

"The FBI has and will continue to participate with its law enforcement partners in addressing the significant crime problem that drug trafficking continues to pose for the United States.

We can never lose sight of how this continued threat weakens the well being of our nation and undermines our national security," said FBI San Antonio Special Agent in Charge Ralph G. Diaz.

"The arrest and search warrants executed over the past two days are yet other examples of the US government's commitment to identify, dismantle and disrupt the Mexican drug and money laundering cartels and gangs. We at the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division remain steadfast in our commitment along with our federal, state and local law enforcement partners to financially disrupt criminal organizations that are determined to undermine our society," said Clarke.

During the course of the SDTX investigations, drugs were seized from flotillas of flat bottomed boats used to across the Rio Grande River in the Sullivan, Texas, area, from bogus hay bales and school buses, cloned business vehicles and dummy dump trucks, and from tractor trailers where the drugs were hidden within legitimate loads. The illicit proceeds of the sale of drugs were found in after-market hidden compartments built into vehicles, in shopping bags and sleeper compartments of tractor trailers.

Several of the indictments include forfeiture notices including a notice to forfeit the interest of charged defendants in the more than 70 lots in residential neighborhoods in Hidalgo County and millions in alleged drug proceeds.

All defendants arrested in recent days either have or are expected to make their initial appearances before a U. S. Magistrate Judge in either Houston, Corpus Christi, Texas, or McAllen, Texas.

The OCDETF investigations leading to these criminal charges were conducted jointly by the DEA, the FBI San Antonio field office, the San Antonio and Houston offices of ICE, IRS-CI, Texas Department of Public Safety and the Houston and Pasadena Police Departments with invaluable assistance and support during the course of these investigations provided by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, U. S. Border Patrol, United States Marshals Service, Customs and Border Protection, the Fort Bend Narcotics Task Force, the police departments of Pharr, Mission and Palmview, Texas, the Hidalgo County Sheriff's Office, the Starr County **High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)** Task Force and law enforcement authorities in Georgia, Ohio, Illinois, Arkansas and North Carolina.

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