

Department of Justice Press Release

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**United States Attorney's Office
Central District of California**

Ten Linked to Mexico-Based Drug Trafficking Ring Accused of Smuggling and Distributing Large Quantities of Methamphetamine Arrested on Federal Charges

LOS ANGELES—A coalition of federal, state, and local law enforcement authorities this morning arrested 10 people linked to a Mexico-based drug trafficking organization that allegedly smuggled large quantities of methamphetamine into the United States and distributed the drug throughout Southern California, the Central Valley and the State of Washington.

Dubbed the Don Chuy Drug Trafficking Organization, the narcotics ring allegedly obtained multi-kilogram quantities of methamphetamine in Mexico; arranged for the transportation of the drugs into the United States, primarily by using hidden compartments and fake car batteries in vehicles driven through international ports of entry; and distributed wholesale quantities of the drug through cells based in the Inland Empire, California's Central Valley and Washington.

During an eight-month investigation into the Don Chuy organization, law enforcement authorities seized approximately 90 pounds of methamphetamine with a street value of well over \$5 million. Authorities made a series of large seizures of narcotics, including the seizure of almost seven pounds of methamphetamine on August 11, 2009; the seizure of almost five pounds of nearly pure methamphetamine on September 9; the seizure of approximately 24 pounds of methamphetamine that was discovered in a tractor-trailer on Interstate 5 in Kern County on October 26; the seizure of more than 10 pounds of methamphetamine in Fresno on November 17; and a seizure this morning of approximately five pounds of methamphetamine at a house in Gardena that authorities believe was maintained by the Don Chuy organization. Also, as authorities investigated people who allegedly transported methamphetamine for the Don Chuy organization, they seized eight kilograms of cocaine secreted in a vehicle that attempted to enter the United States at the Calexico Port of Entry on September 18.

The Don Chuy Drug Trafficking Organization is named after the ring's alleged leader, Jesus Marquez-Marquez, who is known as "Don Chuy" and allegedly stored drugs in Tijuana stash houses before the drugs were moved across the international border. Marquez-Marquez, who is the lead defendant in a criminal complaint filed yesterday in United States District Court, is believed to be in the Mexican state of Michoacán. Several of Don Chuy's top lieutenants—including David Jimenez-Pedroza, who allegedly oversaw domestic distribution of Don Chuy narcotics—were arrested today or were previously taken into custody.

The criminal complaint charges 31 defendants with conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, a

charge that carries a statutory maximum penalty of life without parole in federal prison.

Those named in the criminal complaint are:

the leader of the drug trafficking organization, Jesus Marquez-Marquez, also known as “Don Chuy,” approximately 40 years of age, who is believed to be residing in Mexico, from where he coordinates for the transportation, importation and delivery of methamphetamine to domestic distributors;

the primary distributor of Don Chuy narcotics in the United States, David Jimenez-Pedroza, also known as “Oscar Manuel Guerrero,” 31 or 32, of Corona, who is currently in federal custody in San Diego;

Jimenez-Pedroza’s brother, Jose Alfredo Jimenez, also known as “Joselito,” of Mira Loma, a fugitive who allegedly oversaw Don Chuy “stash houses” and who took over as leader of the United States operations of the Don Chuy organization when his brother was arrested in January;

Sergio Enrique Beltran Guerrero, also known as “Kique,” 38, who is currently in state custody in San Diego and who allegedly led an organization that transported narcotics for Don Chuy and other drug trafficking organizations;

Isaias Serrano, also known as “Chaias,” who is believed to be in Mexico, where he assists Marquez in the Mexico operations of the Don Chuy organization;

David Silva Benavides, also known as “Prieto,” 28, of Othello, Washington, who led a Don Chuy distribution cell in Washington;

Martin Garcia Angulo, also known as “King Midas,” 43, of Perris, who allegedly helped run a Don Chuy distribution cell;

Jose Ascencion Garcia, also known as “Chon,” 34 or 40, of East Los Angeles, who allegedly helped Angulo run a Don Chuy distribution cell;

Alejandro Perez Manzo, also known as “Javier,” 26, of Turlock, California, who allegedly ran a Don Chuy distribution cell in the Fresno-Turlock area;

“Margaro,” of Tacoma, Washington, who allegedly worked with the Washington-based distribution cell;

Humberto Hubert P. Barraza, 22, of Upland, who allegedly led another Don Chuy distribution cell;

Sergio Beltran Sarabia, also known as “El Senior,” 63, who is currently in federal custody in San Diego and who worked with the Beltran’s drug transportation organization;

Uriel Valdovinos Garcia, also known as “Chente,” who is believed to be in his mid-40s and residing in Mexico;

Juan Alonso Aispuro Chagoza, 20, who is believed to be in Mexico and allegedly helped coordinate the transportation of methamphetamine for the Don Chuy organization;

Jose Pacheco Duran, 39, who is currently in state custody and who allegedly smuggled methamphetamine into the United States;

Sergio Chavez Pulido, also known as “Checo,” 43, of Mira Loma, who allegedly transported narcotics for the Don Chuy organization on at least one occasion;

Jose Luis Mata-Garcia, who is in his late 30s, of Othello, Washington;

Iliana Farias, 30, who allegedly was involved in the Washington-based distribution cell;

Octavio Felix Gonzalez, 39, who is believed to be in Mexico, where he allegedly worked with Beltran’s organization;

Anselma Vega Romero, 40, who is believed to be in Mexico and who also allegedly worked with Beltran’s organization;

Jorge Villanueva, also known as “Jorjon,” who is either 41 or 42, of Fontana, who allegedly led a Don Chuy distribution cell;

Basilio Maldonado, also known as “Chilo,” 33, of Corona, who allegedly ran a Don Chuy distribution cell;

Jairo Alejandro Rodela, 24, who is believed to be in Mexico, who allegedly ran Don Chuy’s distribution cell in Bakersfield;

Lizeth Carpio Hernandez, 19, who is believed to be in Mexico and who allegedly helped the Don Chuy organization smuggle methamphetamine into the United States;

Jose Pulido Sanchez, also known as “Chespiro,” 63, of La Puente;

Elieser Ceja Gallegos, 57, of Ontario;

Erika Cecilia Valdovino, 37, of Moreno Valley, who allegedly helped smuggled methamphetamine into the United States;

Jose Luis Nunez, who is either 33 or 39, of La Puente, who allegedly ran a drug trafficking ring that supplied methamphetamine to Villanueva’s distribution cell;

Jesus Alvarez Jr., 27, of Bakersfield, who allegedly worked with Rodela in the Bakersfield distribution cell;

Joanelle Mirasol DeLa Cruz, 37; and

Alma Rodriguez, 29, of Corona, who allegedly helped her boyfriend, Jimenez-Pedroza, with activities related to the Don Chuy organization.

Those arrested today are expected to make initial court appearances in federal courts in the districts where they were arrested. Those arrested in the Los Angeles and Inland Empire regions will make their appearances in United States District Court in Los Angeles.

A criminal complaint contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty.

The case against the members of the Don Chuy Drug Trafficking Organization is the result of an investigation conducted by the Southern California Drug Task Force, which includes special agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration. The investigation received substantial assistance from IRS-Criminal Investigation, the Regional Methamphetamine Task Force, the Inland Crackdown Narcotics Alliance, the Fontana Police Department, the Downey Police Department, and the Los Angeles Police Department. The Southern California Drug Task Force operates within the High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program, which is designed to enhance and coordinate efforts among local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

“The organization targeted today is believed to be responsible for bringing more than 200 pounds of meth into Southern California every month—enough meth to supply thousands of people with this highly addictive and dangerous drug,” said Timothy J. Landrum, DEA Special Agent in Charge in Los Angeles. “Today’s operation is an example of the significant results that are achieved through the cooperation of local, state and federal law enforcement within the HIDTA task force.”

Steven M. Martinez, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI in Los Angeles, stated: “The FBI has successfully worked with partners locally, federally and internationally to address the increases in southwest border violence, much of which is fueled by the importation of narcotics to Southern California for distribution around the United States. Arresting the leaders of criminal enterprises like the Don Chuy Organization will disrupt their large-scale methamphetamine distribution operation and have a positive impact on the Los Angeles region.”

Leslie P. DeMarco, Special Agent in Charge of IRS - Criminal Investigation’s Los Angeles Field Office, observed: “Methamphetamine and the dealers who traffic it are hurting our communities. In conjunction with our law enforcement partners on the federal, state, and local level, we are committed to task force investigations that make takedown operations like today’s search warrants and arrest of members of the Don Chuy Drug Trafficking Organization possible. IRS - Criminal Investigation plays a unique role in federal law enforcement’s counter-drug effort because we target the profit and financial gains of narcotics traffickers, enabling increased criminal prosecutions and asset forfeitures.”

In addition to the FBI, the DEA and IRS-Criminal Investigation, the following agencies participated in this morning’s takedown: the Regional Methamphetamine Task Force, the Inland Crackdown Narcotics Alliance, the Fontana Police Department, the Downey Police Department, the Los Angeles Police Department, the United States Marshals Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department, the California Highway Patrol, the Hawthorne Police Department, the Inland Regional Narcotics Enforcement Team (IRNET), the California Methamphetamine Task Force (CALMET), the United States Secret Service, the San Bernardino Sheriff’s Department, and the Riverside Sheriff’s Department.