



Organization imported cocaine, marijuana, heroin from Mexico

ALBUQUERQUE – A federal jury sitting in Las Cruces returned a verdict Oct. 6 that found Amado Acevedo-Gonzalez, 36, a Mexican national, and Yolanda Rodriguez, 50, a U.S. citizen who formerly resided in Mexico, guilty on drug trafficking offenses and money laundering charges after a four-day trial.

The jury's guilty verdict was announced by U.S. Attorney Damon P. Martinez, Special Agent in Charge Will R. Glaspy of the DEA's El Paso Division, Special Agent in Charge Terry Wade of the FBI's Albuquerque Division, Ismael Nevarez Jr., Special Agent in Charge of the Phoenix Field Office of IRS Criminal Investigation, and Chief Patrol Agent Jeffrey D. Self of the U.S. Border Patrol El Paso Sector.

Acevedo-Gonzalez and Rodriguez were convicted on multiple charges contained in a 45-count indictment that was filed in Oct. 2015.

The indictment charged Acevedo-Gonzalez, Rodriguez and 18 others with participating in a major drug trafficking organization that imported large amounts of cocaine, marijuana, and heroin from Mexico into the United States.

The indictment alleged that members of the DTO distributed the cocaine, marijuana and heroin in Albuquerque and other places in the United States, and smuggled drug proceeds from the United States to Mexico.

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According to the indictment, the conspiracy operated in Doña Ana, Luna and Bernalillo Counties from October 2014 through October 2015.

The indictment was the result of an investigation by the DEA, FBI, IRS, and U.S. Border Patrol that was designated as part of the Justice Department's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force program, which combines the resources and unique expertise of federal agencies and their local counterparts in a coordinated effort to disrupt and dismantle major drug trafficking organizations.

During the investigation, federal agents seized and purchased 6.2 kilograms of cocaine, 2.9 kilograms of methamphetamine, 1039.9 kilograms of marijuana, and 351 grams of heroin. They also seized \$267,030.00 in drug proceeds and other assets valued at approximately \$153,000.00.

Of the 20 defendants charged in the indictment, 12 have been arrested, including 10 who entered guilty pleas, and the remaining eight are fugitives.

Acevedo-Gonzalez, who was charged with participating in the drug trafficking conspiracy, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, and using a communication device to facilitate drug trafficking crimes, and Rodriguez, who was charged with participating in the drug trafficking and money laundering conspiracies and international money laundering, entered not guilty pleas, and elected to proceed to trial.

The trial of Acevedo-Gonzalez and Rodriguez began on Oct. 3, 2016.

The trial concluded yesterday when the jury returned verdicts finding Acevedo-Gonzalez and Rodriguez guilty on all of the charges against them.

The evidence at trial established that Acevedo-Gonzalez and Rodriguez were part of a Mexican DTO that imported cocaine and marijuana into the United States, and exported the drug

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proceeds back to Mexico. More specifically, the evidence established that Acevedo-Gonzalez, distributed marijuana for the DTO, and that Rodriguez was a courier who transported drugs and drug proceeds from Albuquerque to Mexico for the DTO.

During the trial, the jury learned about the ten-month investigation into the DTO during which court-authorized wiretaps were used to gather evidence that permitted federal agents to learn about shipments of cocaine and marijuana that were transported in tractor-trailers from Mexico to an auto body shop in Albuquerque. From the auto body shop, a member of the DTO coordinated with bosses in Mexico to distribute the drugs, and to collect drug proceeds and transport them back to Mexico.

Federal agents testified about this pattern – drugs going north in tractor-trailers and drug proceeds going south – occurred numerous times. Based on their knowledge of this pattern, federal agents were able to seize more than \$250,000 in drug proceeds from couriers and a tractor-trailer containing marijuana.

The jury deliberated for a little over an hour before returning their guilty verdicts against Acevedo-Gonzalez and Rodriguez. Both remain in federal custody pending sentencing hearings, which have yet to be scheduled.

At sentencing, Acevedo-Gonzalez faces a statutory maximum penalty of five years in prison, and Rodriguez faces a statutory maximum penalty of 20 years in prison.

The following defendants have entered guilty pleas in this case and, except as noted, are awaiting sentencing:

Rene Amaya-Rivas, 27, a Mexican national who was residing in Odessa, Texas, pled guilty on April 27, 2016, to conspiracy, possession of cocaine with intent to distribute and money laundering charges.

Pablo Alberto Arana-Delgado, 35, a Mexican national who was residing in El Paso, Texas, pled guilty on June 8, 2016, to conspiracy and possession of cocaine and marijuana with intent to

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distribute charges.

Elier Gabriel Jaime-Castillo, 35, a Mexican national illegally present in the United States, pled guilty on Aug. 30, 2016, to conspiracy, money laundering, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute and use of a communication device to facilitate a drug trafficking crime charges.

Mauricio Ledezma, 23, of Albuquerque pled guilty on Dec. 8, 2015, to misprision of a felony, and was sentenced on April 6, 2016, to 24 months of probation.

Cerbando Carbajal, 20, of Columbus pled guilty on March 29, 2016, to conspiracy and money laundering charges.

Emilia Quezada, 31, a U.S. citizen who was residing in Chihuahua, Mexico, pled guilty on April 1, 2016, to conspiracy and money laundering charges.

George A. Taylor, 55, of Deming pled guilty on April 20, 2016, to conspiracy, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute and money laundering charges.

Grisel H. Majalca, 32 of Columbus pled guilty on Aug. 3, 2016, to conspiracy, use of a communication device to facilitate a drug trafficking crime and money laundering charges.

Leonardo Martinez-Olivas, 49, a Mexican national, pled guilty on May 11, 2016, to conspiracy and money laundering charges.

Neftali Garcia-Torres, 20, a Mexican national, pled guilty on Sept. 14, 2016, to misprision of a felony.

The following defendants, all Mexican nationals, have yet to be arrested and are considered fugitives: Edgar Estopellan-Torres, Ignacio Villalobos-Salinas, 30, Angel Daniel Silva-Silva, 31, Rigoberto Estopellan-Torres, 35, Jesus Muñoz-Lechuga, 36, Emilio Delgado-Olivas, 43, Jesus Gilberto Varela-Sanchez, 28, and Carlos Adrian Ortega-Acevedes, 25.

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Charges in indictments are merely accusations and defendants are presumed innocent unless found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case was investigated by the Las Cruces offices of the DEA, FBI, IRS and the U.S. Border Patrol. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Selesia L. Winston and Renee L. Camacho of the U.S. Attorney's Las Cruces Branch Office are prosecuting the case.