



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
TUESDAY, JULY 8, 2003
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AG
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TDD (202) 514-1888

12 LEADERS OF MEXICAN NARCOTICS CARTEL INDICTED

SAN DIEGO, CA - Attorney General John Ashcroft and United States Attorney Carol C. Lam announced today the unsealing of two indictments charging a total of 12 individuals who represent the top hierarchy of the Arellano-Felix Organization (AFO). Long-reputed to be one of the most notorious multi-national drug trafficking organizations ever, the AFO controlled the flow of cocaine, marijuana and other drugs through the Mexican border cities of Tijuana and Mexicali into the United States. Its operations also extended into southern Mexico as well as Colombia.

In an unprecedented show of international cooperation between the United States and Mexico in criminal narcotics prosecutions, Mexican Attorney General Rafael Macedo-De La Concha, whose office provided substantial assistance to the U.S. during the course of the investigation, joined Attorney General Ashcroft at the press conference announcing the unsealing of the indictments in San Diego, California. The Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, John P. Walters, also participated in the press conference.

“These indictments mark the culmination of years of hard work and represent the finest in international cooperation and interagency teamwork,” said Attorney General John Ashcroft. “This case sends a message to drug dealers everywhere: We will investigate, prosecute, and punish all those who deal in drugs. There is no escape across the border.”

“Mexico and the United States have a shared interest in reducing the availability of these poisons, and punishing those who would push them on our young people,” said Director John P. Walters. “We applaud the continued courageous leadership that the Fox Administration has demonstrated in this important area. Both of our nations are demonstrably better off when drug traffickers are brought to justice and fewer drugs pollute our streets.”

The first indictment against 11 individuals charges an overarching racketeering conspiracy running from 1986 to the present and was the culmination of a decade-long investigation of the AFO by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement (BNE). The indictment alleges that, beginning in the mid-1980's and continuing to the present, the AFO was responsible for the importation and distribution in the United States of hundreds of tons of cocaine and marijuana.

The indictment unsealed today charges all 11 defendants with conducting the affairs of an illegal enterprise through a pattern of racketeering activity (RICO), conspiracy to import and distribute cocaine and marijuana, as well as money laundering. The indictment alleges that the leadership of the AFO negotiated directly with Colombian cocaine trafficking organizations, including a Colombian guerrilla organization, for the purchase of multi-ton shipments of cocaine, received those shipments, by sea and by air, in Mexico, and then arranged for the smuggling of the cocaine into the United States and its further distribution throughout the U.S. The indictment also alleges that the proceeds of the AFO's drug trafficking, estimated by law enforcement to be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, were then smuggled back into Mexico.

The indictment unsealed today also alleges that the AFO recruited, trained and armed groups of bodyguards and assassins who were responsible for protecting the leaders of the Organization, and also for conducting assassinations of rival drug traffickers, suspected cooperators, uncooperative Mexican law enforcement and military personnel, and members of the Mexican news media who printed stories unfavorable towards the AFO. Law enforcement officials estimate that the AFO was responsible for more than one hundred drug-related murders, both in Mexico and in the United States. The indictment specifically alleges twenty (20) murders in the United States and Mexico that were carried out by the AFO.

Five of the defendants named in this indictment are currently in Mexican custody, while the other six are at large and believed to be residing in Mexico. The United States will seek extradition of all 11 individuals from Mexico to the United States to stand trial in this case.

In addition, a second, separate indictment, also unsealed today, charges Gustavo Rivera-Martinez for his alleged involvement with the Arellano-Felix organization. Specifically, Rivera-Martinez is charged with conspiracy to import and conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, as well as aiding and abetting. The indictment alleges that Rivera-Martinez is a lieutenant level manager in the AFO who is a close confidant and adviser to Javier Arellano-Felix, the current leader of AFO trafficking operations in northern Baja California.

In addition to the international cooperation and assistance, the investigation was made possible by the work of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Internal Revenue Service, Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and the California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement.

DEFENDANTS

Alberto Benjamin Arellano-Felix

DOB: 11/08/53

Status: In Mexican custody

Eduardo Ramon Arellano-Felix

DOB: 11/10/56

Status: At large

Francisco Javier Arellano-Felix

DOB: 11/12/69

Status: At large

Manuel Aguirre-Galindo

DOB: 11/20/43

Status: At large

Jesus Labra-Aviles

DOB: 1945

Status: In Mexican custody

Ismael Higuera-Guerrero

DOB: 03/17/61

Status: In Mexican custody

Gilberto Higuera-Guerrero

DOB: 04/15/68

Status: At large

Efrain Perez

DOB: 1954

Status: At large

Jorge Aureliano-Felix

DOB: 04/15/52

Status: At large

Rigoberto Yanez

DOB: 1962

Status: In Mexican custody

Armando Martinez-Duarte

DOB: 08/12/54

Status: In Mexican custody

Gustavo Rivera-Martinez

DOB: 7/22/61

Status: At large

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