



Department of Justice

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias
Northern District of Georgia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

02/25/08

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CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

FIVE DEFENDANTS FROM NORTHWEST GEORGIA DRUG GANG
CONVICTED OF RACKETEERING, MURDER, DRUG,
AND FIREARMS CRIMES

Rome, GA - Five defendants were convicted today by a jury in federal district court of criminal charges that include racketeering, murder, attempted murder, assault, methamphetamine trafficking, and numerous related firearms offenses. The jury convicted the defendants after six weeks of trial and two days of deliberations. The five defendants were the leaders of a racketeering enterprise that originally included 30 defendants in the first indictment.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of today's verdict, "The truly violent character of this drug gang, which operated out of the small town of Cedartown, Georgia, is demonstrated by the fact that the racketeering convictions are based on several violent crimes, including five murders, attempted murder, and kidnaping, as well as drug trafficking. The five murders for which defendants Villenas-Reyes and Shane Rosser were convicted were 50% of the total number of murders that occurred in Floyd and Polk counties in 2003." Nahmias added, "The use of federal racketeering and drug statutes to attack the leadership of an organization is important, especially with an organization such as this that operated across local and state jurisdictional lines. Indeed, this prosecution resulted from the excellent combined investigative efforts of local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies."

FBI Atlanta Special Agent In Charge Greg Jones said, "Getting inside of these violence driven gangs is a very difficult challenge for law enforcement agencies when conducting such investigations. The skills and expertise of the agents and officers brought together from the many varied agencies involved was the key to the successful outcome of this investigation. The FBI remains committed to working with its law enforcement partners in the aggressive investigation and prosecution of these types of criminal organizations."

"The guilty verdict has made it clear that those involved in criminal activity and responsible for terrorizing communities will be brought to justice," said Kenneth Smith, Special Agent in Charge of ICE's Office of Investigations in Atlanta. "ICE and its federal,

state, and local counterparts will continue working together to dismantle organized crime rings that threaten public safety.”

GBI Director Vernon Keenan said, “The GBI's priority is addressing the violent crime problem in smaller communities across Georgia, and we are pleased with the GBI's role in the successful investigation and prosecution of those involved in this methamphetamine trafficking gang. The cooperation among local, state and federal law enforcement agencies in this effort was outstanding and was paramount to the successful conclusion of this case.”

According to Nahmias and evidence at trial: DANIEL VILLENAS-REYES, 36, MARCO ANTONIO CORDERO, 33, SAMMY DUQUE, 34, and JUAN DUQUE, 31, all of Cedartown; and HOUSTON SHANE ROSSER, 36, of Centre, Alabama, were all convicted of conspiring to engage in a racketeering enterprise in Polk and Floyd counties in Georgia between March 2000 and December 2006. The evidence at trial proved that the enterprise trafficked methamphetamine and protected its territory, enforced discipline among members, and collected debts through a pattern of racketeering activities that included the murders of five people, attempted murder, aggravated assault, kidnaping, transporting and harboring illegal aliens, drug trafficking, and arson. The defendants were also convicted of conspiring to distribute and distributing methamphetamine and cocaine.

DANIEL VILLENAS-REYES was convicted of shooting and killing Cesar Juarez Vasquez, Arturo Torrez Ventura, and a woman who has never been identified, in a house at 506 7th Street, Cedartown, on September 16, 2003, and setting the house on fire to hide the evidence of the murders. Evidence at trial showed that VILLENAS-REYES committed the murders after residents of the house refused to pay him for highly diluted methamphetamine that he had supplied them. VILLENAS-REYES was also convicted of participating in the shooting of Jesse Vargas in Rome on December 17, 2002, several counts of selling methamphetamine, and several counts of using firearms in connection with crimes of violence and drug trafficking offenses.

In addition to the racketeering and drug trafficking offenses, HOUSTON SHANE ROSSER was convicted of shooting and killing T.J. Agan and Christopher Fortenberry in their home in southern Floyd County on March 27, 2003. Evidence at trial showed that ROSSER killed Agan over a methamphetamine debt, and he killed Fortenberry after finding that Agan was not alone. Fortenberry became Agan's roommate a few weeks before the murders occurred. Josh Darrell Smith went to trial with the other five defendants on January 14, 2008. But he pleaded guilty midway through the trial and testified that he heard ROSSER shoot Agan and watched ROSSER shoot Fortenberry. Another eyewitness who had accompanied ROSSER to Agan's home also testified against him.

MARCO ANTONIO CORDERO was also convicted of pistol-whipping a victim whom CORDERO suspected of stealing methamphetamine, selling methamphetamine while he was escaped from the Polk County Jail in the late winter of 2003, and being a convicted felon and an illegal alien who possessed several firearms on different occasions while he was a fugitive. Other evidence presented at trial showed that CORDERO, VILLENAS-REYES and SAMMY DUQUE were previously deported to their native country of Mexico before and during the operation of their criminal enterprise, but illegally re-entered the United States.

SAMMY DUQUE and his brother, JUAN DUQUE, were also convicted of selling methamphetamine, and JUAN DUQUE was convicted of participating with CORDERO in the pistol-whipping of an innocent victim and using a firearm to commit that crime of violence.

Evidence presented at trial also showed that Polk County and Floyd County law enforcement agencies assisted each other in investigating the five murders when a witness came forward in January 2004 and explained how the killings were part of the violent operation of a single methamphetamine trafficking enterprise that operated out of Cedartown. The FBI and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) then assembled a multi-agency task force that investigated the wide-sweeping enterprise and led to the prosecution of thirty alleged enterprise members. In addition to the five defendants convicted today, 15 other co-defendants have pleaded guilty to the racketeering charges in the indictment. Ten more defendants await trial. No trial date has yet been set.

VILLENAS-REYES, CORDERO, ROSSER, SAMMY DUQUE and JUAN DUQUE face maximum sentences of life in federal prison and fines of at least \$4,250,000. There is no parole in the federal criminal system. Their sentencing is scheduled for May 9, 2008, at 1:30 p.m. before United States District Judge Murphy.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the FBI, ICE, and the GBI, with substantial assistance from the Georgia State Fire Marshal's Arson Unit, the Floyd County Police Department, the Polk County Sheriff's Office, the Polk County Police Department and the Cedartown Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorneys Kim S. Dammers and William G. Traynor are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.

