

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE OPA

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2008 (202) 514-2007

[WWW.USDOJ.GOV](http://WWW.USDOJ.GOV)

TDD (202) 514-1888

**REMARKS AS DELIVERED BY ATTORNEY GENERAL MICHAEL B. MUKASEY ANNOUNCING THE RESULTS OF PROJECT RECKONING**

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

Thank you David, and good morning. And thank you to acting Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Michele Leonhart, and Italian Public Prosecutor, Dr. Nicola Gratteri, for joining me here today.

Earlier today and yesterday, indictments were unsealed here in Atlanta and elsewhere as part of a massive international operation against a Mexican-based drug trafficking organization known as the Gulf Cartel. Among those indicted are three leaders of the cartel, each of whom had been on the Justice Department's Consolidated Priority Organization Target list of the world's most significant drug traffickers. As of now, operations yesterday and today have resulted in the arrest of 175 people, including 43 in the Atlanta area.

These indictments and arrests are the culmination of a 15-month investigation led by the DEA called Project Reckoning. Between today's operations and earlier ones, Project Reckoning has resulted in more than 500 arrests, and seizure of drugs and drug money in staggering amounts: more than 16 tons of cocaine, more than 1000 pounds of methamphetamine, more than 25 tons of marijuana, and over \$60 million in U.S. currency.

Today's indictments charge members and associates of the Gulf Cartel with transporting and distributing large amounts of cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and marijuana from Central and South America into the United States and Europe, primarily across the Southwest border. The Indictments also charge members of the Gulf Cartel with money laundering operations, and the use of violence in support of its other criminal activities.

We believe these arrests are a substantial blow to the Gulf Cartel, and law enforcement can take just pride in the success of this operation. The coordination and cooperation displayed – among districts, agencies, and even among nations – was tremendous.

In addition to the DEA, more than 200 law enforcement agencies were involved in the operation, including the Justice Department's Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section and Office of International Affairs; U.S. Attorneys' Offices and law enforcement in more than a dozen states and jurisdictions; the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force; the Internal Revenue Service; the FBI; U.S. Customs and Border Protection; Immigration and Customs Enforcement; and the U.S. Secret Service. Project Reckoning is a textbook

example of how law enforcement can and should work together, and of the results that can come from such cooperation.

In particular, I want to thank the governments of Italy and Mexico for their invaluable support of this operation and in the broader fight against narcotics trafficking.

Under the leadership of President Calderon and Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora, the Mexican government has taken the fight against cartels to a historic level. Cooperation between the United States and Mexico in combating drug trafficking organizations, including the Gulf Cartel, is now at unprecedented levels. Since December 2006, for example, Mexico has extradited 145 fugitives to the United States. This includes, most relevant to today's operation, the extradition in January 2007 of alleged Gulf Cartel leader Osiel Cardenas Guillen.

Today's operation also involved significant cooperation from Italy, for which I thank Dr. Gratteri. Among those charged in today's indictments are members of an organized crime group based in Calabria, Italy, who allegedly sold cocaine supplied by the Gulf Cartel via New York. The Italian government's firm commitment to combat drug trafficking is evident in the success of this operation.

The international aspect of this case reminds us that to be effective, we must fight the war on drugs collectively, and across borders. Next month, I will travel to Mexico for the Organization of American States meeting of public security ministers, to discuss, among other things, the threat posed by drug cartels such as the Gulf Cartel and ways we can continue to work together to stop them. Much of the success we have enjoyed would not have been possible without our having worked together.

By spreading dangerous drugs and resorting to brutal violence, international drug cartels pose an extraordinary threat both here and abroad. Too many of communities, here and abroad, have been damaged by the drugs and violence associated with these cartels. Too many innocent citizens, and too many law enforcement officers, have died on both sides of the Southwest border, and in cities and towns across this country. Project Reckoning is well named, and we want it to serve as a promise to law-abiding citizens, law enforcement officers, and to the drug cartels, that we will not let up in our efforts to combat the threat.

I would now like to turn the microphone over to DEA acting Administrator Michele Leonhart to give you more details on the operations.

###

DO NOT REPLY TO THIS MESSAGE. IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, PLEASE USE THE CONTACTS IN THE MESSAGE OR CALL THE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS AT 202-514-2007.