

NEWS RELEASE



OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA San Diego, California

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For Immediate Release

MEXICAN MAFIA MEMBER SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - January 16, 2009

San Diego, CA - United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that today United States District Judge Dana M. Sabraw sentenced Raul Leon to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole. Defendant Leon was sentenced based upon his October 3, 2007, guilty plea to participating in a racketeering influenced corrupt organization (RICO) conspiracy involving the Mexican Mafia, aka "La Eme," prison/street gang. In his guilty plea, Leon admitted that the Mexican Mafia racketeering organization is involved in a wide range of criminal activities, including: murder, attempted murder, conspiracy to import and distribute controlled substances, conspiracy to interfere with commerce through threats of violence, conspiracy to launder drug proceeds and robbery. The defendant also acknowledged the manner in which the Mexican Mafia is able to exert control over illegal activities both within the prison system and on the streets of Southern California through its connection to various Hispanic street gangs in San Diego.

In his plea, Leon admitted to participating in the June 2002 murder of Jabila Barragan. Despite his incarceration in the restrictive Special Housing Unit (SHU) at Pelican Bay State Prison, defendant Leon admitted that he participated in conspiracies to distribute controlled substances and launder drug proceeds. Defendant Leon also admitted that he was a member of the Mexican Mafia.

The RICO conspiracy charge to which the defendant pled guilty stemmed from a long-term investigation conducted by the multi-agency San Diego Violent Crimes Task Force-Gang Group and North County Regional Gang Task Force, which targeted the criminal activities of Hispanic street gangs with ties to the Mexican Mafia, or “La Eme.” A total of thirty-six defendants were arrested and prosecuted in federal court based upon the investigation.

United States Attorney Hewitt commented, “The criminal impact the Mexican Mafia has on our community is profound - their members and associates are involved in violent crimes and significant drug-related activities. The federal RICO conspiracy statute allowed the Government to hold the defendant accountable for the full scope of his criminal activities, including violent crimes traditionally prosecuted in state court. Including the life sentence imposed today, the Government has successfully sought and received a total of eleven life sentences for defendants arrested in connection with this investigation.”

FBI Special Agent in Charge Keith Slotter commented, “Given this organization’s history of extreme violence and other criminal activity, any time we get a member of the Mexican Mafia off the streets this city is considerably safer.”

U.S. Attorney Hewitt praised the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (“OCDETF”) for the coordinated team effort culminating in the charges filed in these cases. The OCDETF program was created to consolidate and utilize all law enforcement resources in this country’s battle against major drug trafficking.

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 06cr1243-DMS

Raul Leon

SUMMARY OF CHARGE

United States v. Raul Leon, et. al. (Case Number 96CR1243-DMS)

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1962(d) - Conspiracy to Conduct Enterprise Affairs
Through a Pattern of Racketeering Activity

Maximum penalties: life in prison
\$4,000,000 fine
5 years of supervised release

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Federal Bureau of Investigation
San Diego Police Department
San Diego Sheriff's Office
North County Regional Gang Task Force
Immigration and Customs Enforcement
Carlsbad Police Department
Escondido Police Department
U.S. Bureau of Prisons
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
Naval Criminal Investigative Service
Oceanside Police Department
Drug Enforcement Administration - Los Angeles and Riverside
Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement - Los Angeles and Riverside
U.S. Marshals Service
Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms