



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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METH AND COCAINE LEADER SENTENCED TO 19 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON

PHOENIX – Juan Tapia-Quintero, 35, of Culiacán, Sinaloa, Mexico, was sentenced yesterday by U.S. District Judge Frederick J. Martone to 230 months prison. Tapia-Quintero pleaded guilty on March 26, 2008 to conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine and five kilograms or more of cocaine, conspiracy to commit promotional money laundering and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

After a six-month investigation, DEA Special Agents arrested Tapia-Quintero and 15 others for distributing methamphetamine, cocaine and possessing 13 firearms, including assault rifles. Tapia-Quintero was the Phoenix-based leader of a drug trafficking organization that imported both methamphetamine and cocaine from Mexico and distributed it in Arizona and the Midwest. Tapia-Quintero's organization used hidden compartments in vehicles to transport large quantities of cocaine and methamphetamine into the U.S. Law enforcement officials seized \$376,085 from Tapia-Quintero and his associates during the investigation.

Tapia-Quintero admitted that he knowingly and intentionally possessed with the intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine and 500 grams of methamphetamine for purpose of distribution. He also admitted to possessing a firearm in furtherance of his drug trafficking activities. Finally, he admitted to using the proceeds of the sale of drugs to further promote the distribution of cocaine and methamphetamine. His brother, Fernando Tapia-Quintero, was also involved in the conspiracy and was sentenced to 135 months in prison on March 20, 2008. In addition to Tapia-Quintero and his brother, four other defendants have been sentenced in this case.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigations Division and the Phoenix Police Department. The prosecution was handled by Kevin M. Rapp and Jennifer E. Green, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

CASE NUMBER: CR07-0261-PHX-FJM
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