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FIVE MEMBERS OF "SUR-13" GANG CONVICTED

Four Defendants Face Life In Prison For Violent Gang Activity

Atlanta, GA -- After a month-long trial, a federal jury late this afternoon has returned guilty verdicts against ARMANDO PRUDENTE, 34, ROBERTO SANDOVAL, 25, ISRAEL CRUZ, 29, JORGE FLORES, 28, and RICARDO GAMA, 29, all of Atlanta, Georgia, on multiple federal charges relating to criminal activity as members of a street gang known as "Sureños-13," or "SUR-13."

PRUDENTE, SANDOVAL, and GAMA were convicted on charges of Racketeering Influence and Corrupt Organization (RICO) conspiracy. PRUDENTE, FLORES, and CRUZ were also convicted on charges of committing Violent Crimes in Aid of Racketeering. PRUDENTE and SANDOVAL were also convicted on charges of possessing with intent to distribute controlled substances, and on charges of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute controlled substances. GAMA was convicted on charges of being an alien in possession of firearms. PRUDENTE and SANDOVAL were acquitted by the jury on a charge of attempted drug distribution.

"The street gang known as SUR-13 was devoted to committing acts of violence, including the murders of innocent persons," said United States Attorney David E. Nahmias. "The indictment broke the leadership structure of SUR-13. Today's convictions should also have a chilling effect on persons who join gangs and commit such heinous crimes."

FBI Atlanta Special Agent In Charge Gregory Jones said after the verdicts, "The FBI, in conjunction with its various law enforcement partners, remains committed to combating such gang activity as that of SUR-13, which has repeatedly shown itself as a violent criminal organization that has no regard for the rule of law. Today's conviction of these individuals is the culmination of many long hours of hard work by our agents, officers and staff and serves as an example of our commitment to making the community a safer place for its citizens."

"The convictions handed down today are a clear endorsement of the value we place on cooperation and collaboration between law enforcement at every level," said Kenneth Smith, Special Agent In Charge for ICE's Office of Investigations in Atlanta. "Gangs pose a serious threat to families in our communities and we are committed to identifying and dismantling these criminal organizations."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and the information presented at trial: The jury found that PRUDENTE, SANDOVAL, CRUZ, FLORES, and GAMA were members of the gang known as Sureños-13, or SUR-13. SUR-13 was active throughout Fulton, DeKalb and Gwinnett counties. For most of the relevant period, PRUDENTE was the leader of SUR-13. Evidence presented in court showed that SUR-13 members committed murders, robberies, carjackings, and drive-by shootings. Members of SUR-13 also dealt drugs, including marijuana, methamphetamine, and cocaine. PRUDENTE, SANDOVAL, and FLORES were found guilty of murdering Rogelio Guzman in a drive-by shooting on April 24, 1999. PRUDENTE ordered that a drive-by shooting be carried out in the territory of a rival gang, and he gave semi-automatic weapons to SANDOVAL and FLORES, who carried out his orders. The evidence presented showed that the victim, Guzman, was not a member of any gang but that he was singled out simply because of the type of vehicle that he drove. CRUZ was found guilty of murdering Florentino Marcial at a neighborhood party on December 13, 2003. SUR-13 members were attending this party when a fight broke out with members of a rival gang. After exchanging insults and obscenities with a member of the rival gang, CRUZ pulled out a handgun and started firing into the crowd, shooting and killing Florentino Marcial in the back as he fled, killing him instantly. According to the evidence presented at trial, Marcial was not a member of any gang. GAMA was convicted on charges of being an illegal alien in possession of firearms. Evidence showed that GAMA sold guns and controlled substances to fellow SUR-13 members.

PRUDENTE, SANDOVAL, CRUZ, and FLORES are expected to be sentenced to life in prison. There is no parole in the federal system. GAMA could receive a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$750,000. Sentencing has been scheduled for February 19, 2008, before United States District Judge Charles A. Pannell.

This case was investigated by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE); the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI); and Members of the FBI Safe Street Task Force, which includes the City of Alpharetta Police Department, the City of Atlanta Police Department, the DeKalb County Police Department, and the Gwinnett County Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorneys Kim Dammers and Paul Jones are prosecuting the case.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta recommends parents and children learn about the dangers of drugs at the following web site: www.justthinktwice.com.

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.