



Department of Justice

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FEDERAL AUTHORITIES RESCUE HOSTAGE HELD CAPTIVE FOR NEARLY A WEEK IN ALLEGED DRUG-DEALING DISPUTE

Alleged Drug Dealer Chained In Basement In Gwinnett County While Captors Sought To Recover \$300,000 Debt

Atlanta, GA - VICTOR ABILES GOMEZ, 20, OMAR MENDOZA-VILLEGAS, 19, and GERARDO SOLORIO REYES, a/k/a "Gera," 23, all from Mexico and illegally in the United States, are making an initial appearance today before United States Magistrate Judge Janet King, on charges related to a drug-related kidnapping incident.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, "This case illustrates the increasing level of dangerous, violent activity we are seeing in North Georgia and around the country in relation to the operation of Mexican-based drug organizations. The drug dealers not only dispense their poisons in our communities, they treat each other brutally - and their violence also puts at risk innocent bystanders, like the residents of this Gwinnett County neighborhood. With tips from and the support of the law-abiding residents of our communities, we will continue our work of dismantling the drug organizations and locking up those who engage in such violence."

Rodney G. Benson, DEA Special Agent in Charge of the Atlanta Field Division said, "It is clear that the Atlanta metropolitan area has become a breeding ground for Mexican-based organized crime fueled by drug trafficking. These traffickers unleash ruthless forms of violence in order to protect and defend their drugs and cash. DEA and our federal, state and local law enforcement colleagues will not tolerate such actions and will continue to vigorously pursue those who continue to indulge in this dubious trade."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and information presented in court: On Friday, July 11, 2008, DEA Strike Force and FBI SWAT agents, working in conjunction with Gwinnett County authorities, successfully located and extricated a hostage who had been held in the basement of a middle-class neighborhood residence in Gwinnett County for nearly one week. The kidnapping victim, a 31-year-old man originally from the Dominican Republic, appeared to be severely dehydrated and badly beaten when agents found him chained to wall near a mattress in the home's unfinished basement, where he had been bound

and gagged. Also found in the basement was an assault rifle and flex cuffs. His alleged captors, VICTOR ABILES GOMEZ, OMAR MENDOZA-VILLEGAS, and GERARDO SOLORIO REYES, a/k/a “Gera,” attempted to flee from authorities during the enforcement action but were captured and arrested. Statements provided by the victim as well as one of his captors reveal that he was being held as ransom for a drug debt of approximately \$300,000 owed to an individual identified only as “Tio.”

Acting on confidential information of a possible kidnapping, federal and local authorities had established surveillance late Friday afternoon of the house, located at 755 East Fork Shady Drive, Lilburn, Georgia. Shortly thereafter, the three defendants were observed at the residence. Apparently upon seeing the authorities, all three attempted to flee. They were pursued and ultimately arrested. Searching the home, agents found the victim inside the basement, where he appeared to be hyperventilating. Agents immediately removed his gag and provided him with fluids and medical attention.

The victim was arrested and detained as a material witness. He remains in federal custody.

After speaking with the victim at the scene, as well as one of his alleged captors, agents learned that the victim had been lured to Atlanta from Rhode Island, purportedly to complete a vehicle purchase transaction with “Tio.” The victim met “Tio” at a Gwinnett area restaurant, and the two then rode to the East Shady Fork Drive residence. Upon entering the garage, the victim was ambushed and assaulted by seven men, several of whom had firearms. After being beaten, he was chained to a wall near a mattress in the basement where agents ultimately found him.

While holding the kidnapping victim, his alleged captors, including “Tio,” contacted the victim’s wife in Rhode Island in an effort to collect a drug debt of \$300,000 that he supposedly owed. The victim admitted to having drug proceeds in this amount, but indicated that he tried to avoid involving his wife for fear of her safety being jeopardized. The victim was constantly threatened and ill-treated during the ordeal.

The investigation of this case, including the location of “Tio,” and the related drug activity is continuing.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the DEA, Strike Force Group One, with assistance from the FBI Swat Team and the Gwinnett County Police Department.

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.

