



PRESS RELEASE

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**ALBUQUERQUE GANG MEMBER TO SERVE 40 YEARS IN PRISON FOR
FEDERAL FIREARMS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING CONVICTION**

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning, a federal judge in Santa Fe, N.M., sentenced Dominic Saavedra, 29, of Albuquerque, to a 40-year term of imprisonment for his conviction on firearms and drug trafficking charges. Saavedra, an admitted member of the Southside Locos Gang, will be on supervised release for three years after he completes his prison sentence.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that the case against Saavedra and his co-defendant, Donald Lee Howard, 43, was brought as part of a federal anti-violence initiative that targets “the worst of the worst” offenders for federal prosecution under the federal firearms and narcotics laws. Under the initiative, a state-wide, multi-agency effort denominated as the New Mexico Federal Gang Task Force, the U.S. Attorney’s Office and federal law enforcement agencies work with New Mexico’s District Attorneys and state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies to target violent or repeat offenders for federal prosecution with the goal of removing repeat offenders from our communities for as long as possible.

Saavedra and Howard were indicted on July 27, 2011, and charged with illegally possessing firearms and ammunition in Bernalillo County on May 20, 2011. Saavedra also was charged with possession of heroin with intent to distribute and using and carrying a firearm in connection with a drug trafficking crime on that same day. On May 20, 2011, Saavedra and Howard were prohibited from possessing firearms and ammunition because each previously had been convicted of several felony offenses.

On April 3, 2012, a federal jury found Saavedra and Howard, 42, guilty of being felons in possession of firearms and ammunition after a two-day trial. The jury also found Saavedra guilty of a possession of heroin with intent to distribute charge and using and carrying a firearm in connection with a drug trafficking crime.

During today's sentencing hearing, Saavedra was sentenced to a mandatory term of 15-years of imprisonment for his felon in possession of a firearm conviction under the Armed Career Criminal Act. Saavedra’s sentence on the heroin trafficking conviction will be served concurrently with the 15-year sentence. Saavedra also was sentenced to a mandatory 25-year term of imprisonment for carrying a firearm in connection with a drug trafficking crime, an

enhanced sentenced based on his prior conviction for a similar offense. By statute, the 25-year sentence must be served consecutive to Saavedra's sentence on the other two counts of convictions, for a total sentence of 40-years of imprisonment.

Howard faces a mandatory minimum 15 years of imprisonment for his felon in possession of a firearm conviction under the Armed Career Criminal Act when he is sentenced. Howard remains in federal custody pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives and the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Louis E. Valencia and David M. Walsh.

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