



PRESS RELEASE

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OPERATION PIRATE TOWN TARGETS OVER 200 VIOLENT CRIMINALS LINKED TO RANCHO SAN PEDRO GANG

1,300 FEDERAL AGENTS AND POLICE DROP DRAGNET ON THE HARBOR AREA

LOS ANGELES – More than 1,300 law enforcement officers this morning fanned out across the San Pedro area, arresting 80 alleged members and associates of the Rancho San Pedro gang, otherwise known as “RSP.” Over 230 individuals are named in both federal and state court documents that allege a host of crimes including violent acts and firearms and narcotics trafficking. This morning’s massive operation stems from a 2 ½- year investigation initiated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) that uncovered a wide range of criminal activities related to the gang.

This investigation began as a joint ATF-LAPD project to reduce violent crime in San Pedro, the port district on the southern tip of Los Angeles. As the investigations grew, other law enforcement agencies joined the investigation to achieve the overall goal of making the community of San Pedro safer.

This morning’s enforcement operations involved officers with the LAPD and special agents with ATF, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), IRS-Criminal Investigation, the U.S. Secret Service (USSS), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation- Office of Correctional Safety- Special Service Unit (CDCR/SSU). A total of 66 individuals were taken into custody on state weapons and narcotics charges and 14 defendants were arrested pursuant to federal indictments.

A federal grand jury in Los Angeles has issued 12 indictments that name a total of 26 defendants in charges ranging from the distribution of methamphetamine to illegal weapon sales to immigration offenses. One indictment names three defendants who allegedly were involved in a series of narcotics transactions, with one sale involving well over one pound of methamphetamine. The lead defendant in that case is also accused of brokering the sale of 22 firearms, including assault rifles. About half of the defendants named in the federal indictments face potential life sentences, and all but one face mandatory minimum sentences of at least five years in federal prison if they are convicted.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office will prosecute approximately 145 defendants on state charges, including illegally possessing weapons and selling drugs ranging from methamphetamine to heroin. The cases will be handled by prosecutors from the District Attorney's Long Beach Branch Office. Arraignments could begin as early as tomorrow in Long Beach Superior Court.

Throughout this investigation, informants and undercover law enforcement personnel purchased 90 firearms and approximately 1.5 kilograms of cocaine, 2 kilograms of crack cocaine, 2.5 kilograms of methamphetamine, 2 kilograms of heroin and 26 pounds of marijuana. This morning authorities seized 14 additional firearms, including a silencer, a small quantity of methamphetamine and cocaine and 10 lbs. of marijuana.

The RSP origins date back to the 1970s. Its membership includes 600 documented members, as well as more than 400 associates.

"More than 400 undercover meetings resulted in the purchase of various quantities of illegal narcotics in addition to 68 firearms bought by ATF undercover operatives. LAPD enforcement actions yielded another two dozen guns in the course of this investigation," said John A. Torres, Special Agent in Charge, ATF Los Angeles Field Division. "The San Pedro community is safer because of ATF's determined efforts to target and dismantle this criminal gang that used firearms and violent acts to further their illegal gains and intimidate the neighborhood." The firearms purchased include short-barreled shotguns, machine guns and assault-style weapons, many of which are suspected to be linked to RSP gang activities.

"I am committed to working closely with our federal partners to fight a gang that has had a stranglehold on one of our LA communities for far too long," said LAPD Chief Charlie Beck. "LAPD detectives, Harbor Area and South Bureau officers and our ATF partners worked long and hard to put together a case that allowed us to arrest those responsible for committing illegal activities on behalf of the Rancho San Pedro Gang."

United States Attorney André Birotte Jr. stated: "The collaboration between federal and local authorities in Los Angeles is unparalleled, and today's operation in San Pedro is another

great example of us joining together to take back our neighborhoods. With scores of gang members, drug dealers and gun merchants being sent to jail today, we have delivered a staggering blow to the Rancho San Pedro gang. The Justice Department is committed to working with our state and local partners to dismantle criminal street gangs so our communities are safer for law-abiding residents.”

Timothy J. Landrum, DEA Special Agent in Charge stated, “Street gangs continue to fund their criminal activity through the sale of illegal drugs. The impact gangs have on our communities is magnified by the high levels of violence associated with their attempts to control and expand drug operations. DEA will continue to work with our law enforcement counterparts to ensure that these drug gangs are taken off our streets.”

“Our objective is to reduce fraud and abuse in the HUD rental assistance programs,” said HUD-OIG Special Agent in Charge James Todak. “Participation in joint law enforcement operations like this helps us achieve our goal.”

The Los Angeles City Attorney’s Office has also filed a gang injunction against the Rancho San Pedro gang that seeks to limit gang members’ ability to associate with one another within a proposed Safety Zone that encompasses much of San Pedro. Additionally, the City Attorney has filed nuisance abatement actions against five commercial and residential locations, including a pizza parlor on Gaffey Street, all of which are associated with gang and narcotics activity. This is the first time a gang injunction and nuisance abatement lawsuits have been filed simultaneously in conjunction with the takedown of a major Southern California street gang.

“Gangs continue to be a dangerous scourge to our community and residents,” said Los Angeles City Attorney Carmen A. Trutanich. “The joint task force efforts by the prosecutors in the City Attorney’s Office along with our law enforcement partners at the state, local and federal level will help put a stop to their crimes and threats to the law-abiding residents of this City and will restore a greater quality of life in our neighborhoods.”

“This operation has dealt a major blow to one of the largest, most dangerous and longest-standing street gangs in the San Pedro area,” said Claude Arnold, special agent in charge for ICE Homeland Security Investigations in Los Angeles. “Today, we are taking back our streets and making it clear that the scourge of fear and crime fostered by this gang is coming to an end.”

As of this press release one individual remains a primary ATF Wanted Person, FRANCISCO FLORES, aka Cisco, dob – 04/11/90. At this point ATF is seeking the community’s assistance with locating FLORES who is wanted for violating federal firearms and narcotics laws. Anyone with information is asked to call 1-800-283-4867 to report his whereabouts.