

Indictments Target Grays Harbor Drug Smuggling Organization Tied to Cedar Mill

Local News

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Posted on : June 14, 2012 at 10:34 am

A Drug Enforcement Administration led task force executed six federal search warrants in Grays Harbor County on the morning of June 13, 2012 as part of the culmination of a lengthy investigation of methamphetamine trafficking in Southwest Washington, announced U.S. Attorney Jenny A. Durkan. Federal agents arrested seven people. The leader of the drug smuggling organization, JOSE NAUR SANCHEZ, 34, of Amanda Park, Washington, allegedly sought to disguise his trafficking activity with the operation of a cedar shingle mill



Two other members of the smuggling ring were arrested and indicted following their arrest in May 2012, with six kilograms of methamphetamine hidden in the spare tire of their car. ISRAEL MAGANA ESPINOZA, 36, Neilton, Washington, and CRISTIAN CALLES, 28, of Aberdeen, Washington, were tracked to a drug lab in Stockton, California, and were arrested by police on their return trip to Washington. When law enforcement raided the Stockton drug lab they seized more than 66 pounds of crystal meth, 88 pounds of liquid slush methamphetamine and disassembled assault rifles packaged for transport to Mexico. "These defendants, who have ties to Mexican cartels, wrongly thought they could hide their drug activity in a rural area and on tribal land," said U.S. Attorney Jenny A. Durkan. "I congratulate the Quinault Nation Narcotics Enforcement Team and Grays Harbor Drug Task Force who were key partners with federal law enforcement in putting a stop to this drug distribution in their community."

"The Quinault Indian Nation will not tolerate any drug activity on its reservation, and we will do all that is necessary to combat it," said Quinault President Fawn Sharp. "Drug traffickers and

all other criminals will make a terrible mistake if they consider any part of our reservation easy target for their misdeeds. Our goal is to find them, prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law, and prevent them from entering our land in the first place. Let this well-coordinated, professional enforcement action stand as a warning to anyone who makes the mistake of thinking otherwise," she said



When executing the federal search warrants on June 13, 2012, agents found liquid methamphetamine. The liquid methamphetamine that investigators seized in Grays Harbor was similar to the liquid methamphetamine seized at the liquid methamphetamine conversion lab in Stockton, California. Investigators also seized several firearms and nearly three pounds of black tar heroin. The leader in the local drug organization and owner of the cedar mill, JOSE NAUR SANCHEZ, will make his initial appearances in U.S. District Court in Tacoma at 2:30 today, June 14, 2012. JOSE NAUR SANCHEZ is charged by indictment with conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute and conspiracy to commit money laundering. ISRAEL MAGANA ESPINOZA and CRISTIAN CALLES are charged by indictment with conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute. Because of the large drug quantities involved, if convicted the men face a mandatory minimum 10 years in prison and up to life in prison and a fine of up to \$10,000,000. To date, federal agents have arrested 17 persons tied to this drug cartel. The charges contained in the indictments and complaints are only allegations. A person is presumed innocent unless and until he or she is proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. This was an Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation, providing supplemental federal funding to the federal and state agencies involved. Multiple local and federal law enforcement officers were involved in this DEA led investigation: Tahoma Narcotics Enforcement Team (TNET), Grays Harbor Drug Task Force, Lakewood Police Department, Quinault Nation Narcotics Enforcement Team, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, and FBI. Additionally, these agencies contributed: DEA Special Operations Division, DEA Modesto, Sacramento and Stanislaus, Clark-Vancouver Regional Drug Task Force, Homeland Security Investigation (HSI), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Lewis County Sheriff's Office, Centralia Police Department and Customs and Border Patrol. "We thank our federal, tribal, and local partners who have supported this unprecedented effort. Your contributions have been invaluable to safeguarding the health and safety of the Quinault

citizenry and non-Indian residents living within our boundaries.” said Quinault President Fawn Sharp. “We ask the people of the Quinault Nation and people everywhere to continue to follow a path of unquestioned resolve to eradicate drugs from our respective societies. Together, we can overcome the wave of drugs entering our homes, schools, and streets, begin to heal, and move toward our vision for healthy, safe, clean, and productive communities,” said Sharp. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jeff Backhus, Marc Perez, and Matthew Thomas.