

## **Aberdeen Arrests Made in Wide Ranging Drug Trafficking Ring**

### **Local News**

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SEATTLE, Wash. - A drug trafficking organization that distributed large amounts of methamphetamine and heroin from Mexico to Washington State was dismantled today with more than a dozen arrests, announced U.S. Attorney Jenny A. Durkan. The criminal organization spanned a large area of the state with operations ranging from Everett to Vancouver, Washington and from Aberdeen on the coast to the Tri-Cities in Eastern Washington. Over the course of the investigation law enforcement has seized more than 56 pounds of heroin and more than eight pounds of highly pure methamphetamine. "This case exemplifies the drug trafficking we see in Western Washington from Mexico based crime groups. These criminal groups are bringing in heroin, meth and cocaine and poisoning our communities," said U.S. Attorney Jenny A. Durkan. "We must stop the flow of these drugs, while also working to reduce demand. Too many families and communities are being irrevocably damaged by addiction." According to records filed in the case, using court authorized wire taps, law enforcement intercepted hundreds if not thousands of drug trafficking related phone calls and text messages between September 2012 and the present. The investigation began in October 2011, and identified members of the criminal organization smuggling drugs from Mexico across the border into Texas and California, and then north to Western Washington. In two notable seizures earlier this year, law enforcement found two kilograms of suspected crystal methamphetamine that was hidden in paint cans in the back of a truck stopped on Interstate 84 in Oregon. A second stop in Aberdeen, Washington resulted in the seizure of more than 53 pounds of heroin. During a search of the vehicle, investigators located an access panel in the rear cargo area of the vehicle that enabled investigators to access the gas tank. Inside of the gas tank, investigators located and removed the suspected heroin. Each package of heroin was covered in mustard and red pepper, which is one method used by drug traffickers in an attempt to mask the smell of the heroin from drug detection canines.

The grand jury has indicted these defendants: Antonio Zuniga-Barajas, 29 of Kennewick, Washington Javier Zuniga-Ochoa, 50, Kennewick, Washington Hector M. Hernandez-Hernandez, 36, of Vancouver, Washington Enrique Orozco-Rojas, 37, Kennewick, Washington Pedro Barragan-Valdovinos, 39, of Pasco, Washington Braulio Zuniga-Cervantes, 30, of Kent, Washington Jose Manuel Pardo-Martinez, 32, of Aberdeen, Washington Esgardo Daniel Martinez-Pizano, 18, of Aberdeen, Washington Victor Carmona-Tapia, 28, of Everett, Washington Omar Valencia-Barajas, 24, of Everett, Washington Jose Trinidad Cuevas-Mendoza, 32, of Monroe, Washington Alberto Bernal-Rodriguez, 43, of Vancouver, Washington Omar Huerta-Garcia, 29, of Pasco, Washington "Drug trafficking organizations have one priority: financial wealth through addiction," said DEA Special Agent in Charge Matthew G. Barnes. "Seizures of heroin are on the rise in the Pacific Northwest. This investigation alone prevented 4 million user doses of heroin from hitting our streets, ruining lives and giving drug dealers over \$1 million dollars in profits. The DEA and our law enforcement partners will continue to have an unwavering focus on keeping our communities safe." Today 14 different locations and multiple vehicles were searched state wide. One additional person was arrested by criminal complaint. Law enforcement seized two pounds of crystal methamphetamine, heroin, two weapons, six vehicles and over \$20,000 in cash. The defendants

appeared in U.S. District Court in Seattle at 2:30 today. If convicted the defendants face a mandatory minimum ten years in prison because of the quantity of drugs involved. The charges contained in the indictment 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. This investigation was led by the Drug Enforcement Administration with significant investigative contributions from the following agencies: ICE - Homeland Security Investigations, South Snohomish County Narcotics Task Force, King County Sheriff's Office, Grays Harbor Drug Task Force, Seattle Police Department, Port of Seattle, Tri-Cities Metro Drug Task Force, and Washington State Patrol. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jeffrey Backhus and Sarah Vogel.