

United States Department of Justice

**For Immediate Release**

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## **"Operation Redemption" Targets Chino Street Gang That Has Ties to the Mexican Mafia**

Twenty-one alleged members or associates of a street gang in Chino, California, were charged in federal indictments for their roles in an alleged narcotics distribution operation that has ties to the Mexican Mafia prison gang, announced Steven M. Martinez, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI in Los Angeles, André Birotte Jr., the United States Attorney in Los Angeles, and Miles Pruitt, Chief of the Chino Police Department.

The investigation, known as, "Operation Redemption," began in January 2008 and targeted members and associates of the "Chino Sinners" street gang who were actively involved in the distribution of narcotics and weapons in the city of Chino and surrounding area, and who are affiliated with the Mexican Mafia prison gang. As a result of the investigation, a federal grand jury returned indictments charging 21 defendants; the main indictment was returned on June 9, 2010. The main indictment, unsealed this morning in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, alleges violations against 15 defendants including the distribution of controlled substances, conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, and unlawful possession of firearms, among others.

Over 200 agents and officers from several federal, local and state agencies executed multiple federal arrest warrants early this morning. Several individuals charged in the federal indictment were already in custody on unrelated charges. Additionally, six individuals were arrested this morning on state charges, related and unrelated to the federal indictment. Several state subjects are currently being sought.

In addition to the arrest warrants, several search warrants were executed in connection with the narcotics operation. The following defendants are charged in the main federal indictment with the drug distribution conspiracy:

Victor Hurtado, dob not available, of San Jacinto

Jaime Banuelos, 29, of Chino

Silvino Perez, currently being sought by law enforcement.

Michael Monsivais, 32, of Chino

Albert Hernandez, 23, of Pomona

Alexander John Hernandez, 34 of Bloomington, CA

David Darnall, 32 of Ontario

Frederick Malgra Garcia, Jr., 42 (transferred from state to federal custody today)

Matthew Reina, 29, of Chino

Romeo Aranda (transferred to federal custody from state custody today)

Lorena Aguirre, 35 of Chino

Crystine Minchau Ramirez in Chino

Anthony Ramirez of Chino

Richard Galvan, dob not available, of Chino

Nick Cervantez, 37, of Pomona

Six additional defendants were named in separate federal indictments related to this investigation with various weapons and/or drug charges. Those defendants have been sentenced.

Evidence obtained during the investigation revealed that the illegal distribution network spanned from San Bernardino County to Riverside and Los Angeles Counties. Investigators identified Chino gang members who allegedly established a partnership with members of the Mexican Mafia prison gang to distribute narcotics into the state prison system.

The investigation focused largely on the drug distribution activities of key operators of the drug distribution network, including Victor Hurtado, who allegedly directed and oversaw the drug trafficking network. According to the indictment, defendant Hurtado oversaw the narcotics trafficking by directing others to obtain and distribute the controlled substances, and to collect payment from customers and redistributors. Defendant Jaime Banuelos allegedly distributed the narcotics he received from Hurtado and various suppliers; and Michael Monsivais, allegedly distributed narcotics locally in the city of Chino. Defendants allegedly trafficked in controlled substances that included mainly methamphetamine; although the gang also distributed quantities of cocaine, heroin and marijuana, according to the indictment.

The network operated in a hierarchical framework where some participants, many of whom are now in custody, allegedly obtained narcotics from the main defendants for further distribution to various customers. The indictment alleges that several defendants

participated in the network by receiving deliveries, dividing the quantities into smaller portions, taking orders, making deliveries, and collecting money.

Several defendants charged were also involved in attempts to bring heroin into the state prison system for defendant Frederick Garcia, who is believed to be the Mexican Mafia's liaison for the Chino area.

The indictment alleges that defendant Frederick Garcia sent messages from inside the California Institution for Men in Chino, California, to various defendants in order to direct the importation of heroin and other controlled substances into the prison.

The federal defendants arrested this morning will have an initial appearance in U.S. District Court in Riverside this afternoon.

If convicted of the charges, the defendants charged in the main indictment face maximum statutory penalties of life in prison.

Officers and agents from various local, state and federal agencies assisted with this morning's operation, including the California Department of Justice; Montclair Police Department; Ontario Police Department; Fontana Police Department; Upland Police Department; California State Parole; San Bernardino County Probation; San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the United States Marshals Service.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in court.