

DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
IMPERIAL COUNTY
Criminal Division
Joseph F. Beard
Assistant District Attorney



GILBERT G. OTERO
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
940 West Main Street, Suite 102
El Centro, CA 92243
Tel: (760) 482-4331 / FAX: (760) 352-4474

PRESS RELEASE
August 30, 2007

Violent Cell of the Mexican Mafia Dismantled in the Imperial Valley

“Operation Gangland”, an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) targeted a significant cell of the Mexican Mafia prison gang operating in Imperial and San Diego counties. Starting as a prison gang formed by Hispanics from the Los Angeles area in the 1950’s, today, the Mexican Mafia is considered by law enforcement to be the most powerful, violent, and well-organized criminal organization with connections reaching well beyond prison walls to throughout the United States and Mexico. This OCDETF funded criminal investigation began in Imperial Valley in November 2005. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Special Service Unit (SSU) of the California Department of Corrections, the Imperial County District Attorney’s Office, the California Attorney General’s Office, along with partners from other state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies conducted a 20-month investigation, which resulted in the indictment of 31 defendants by a San Diego Grand Jury on August 21, 2007. The 46-count indictment charges the defendants with multiple violations of the California Penal and Health and Safety Codes, including, conspiracy to commit extortion and distribution of narcotics, attempted murder, solicitation to commit murder, kidnapping, extortion, attempted extortion, torture, drug sales, firearms sales, assault with the intent to commit great bodily injury, assault with a deadly weapon, and possession of an assault weapon. The indictment further alleges all 46 counts are gang-related within the meaning of California’s Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act (the S.T.E.P. act).

Through the cooperative efforts of state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies, this lengthy investigation culminated on August 30, 2007, with the execution of 13 search warrants and numerous arrest warrants executed throughout the Imperial Valley area at locations used by gang members to conduct their criminal activities. A search warrant and several arrest warrants were also executed simultaneously in the San Diego, California area. During the course of the investigation agents arrested 12 gang members and seized firearms, heroin, and methamphetamine. Other law enforcement agencies who assisted with this investigation were the El Centro Police Department, Imperial County Sheriff’s Office, Calexico Police Department, Brawley Police Department, Holtville Police Department, California Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, United States Border Patrol, California Department of Corrections, Parole Division, Imperial Valley Narcotic Task Force, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The arrest and prosecution of 31 individuals associated with the Mexican Mafia will have a severe impact on the organization’s criminal activities in the Imperial County and San Diego, California areas. This investigation is an example of the high degree of cooperation and

coordination between state, local and, federal law enforcement agencies to dismantle these violent criminal organizations in an effort to make our communities safer places in which to live.