



SANTA ANA GANG TASK FORCE

NEWS RELEASE

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GANG TASK FORCE DISMANTLES ORGANIZATION THAT CONTROLLED HISPANIC GANGS IN ORANGE COUNTY

Federal RICO Indictment Targets Members of Group

That Wielded Power over Gangsters on the Street and in Jail

An anti-gang task force this morning arrested 14 defendants charged in a federal racketeering indictment with exercising control over Hispanic street gangs across Orange County. The indictment alleges that members of the Ojeda Organization – named after leader and Mexican Mafia member Peter Ojeda – extorted “taxes” from street gangs and punished non-payers with assaults.

In addition to the arrests made by well over 100 agents and officers associated with the Santa Ana Gang Task Force, eight defendants are already in state custody.

The three-count indictment, which was returned by a federal grand jury in Santa Ana on June 8 and unsealed this morning, asserts that the Ojeda Organization engaged in extortion and assault, as well as assisting in the distribution of narcotics throughout Orange County. Controlled by Peter Ojeda, the organization included high-ranking members of several Hispanic street gangs, which helped the organization exert its influence “from the streets of Orange County into the Orange County jail system and

the California correctional system,” according to the indictment.

The case against the Ojeda Organization was announced at a press conference this morning by United States Attorney Debra W. Yang, FBI Assistant Director in Charge Richard Garcia, Santa Ana Police Chief Paul M. Walters, California Department of Corrections Assistant Director Robert Rimmer and Michael Bukovac, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

“A coordinated effort between local, state and federal authorities has taken down one of the most powerful gangsters in Orange County.” Said United States Attorney Debra Wong Yang. “I am pleased that my office could assist the Santa Ana Gang Task force by bringing the federal RICO statute into play. It is my hope that the arrests today will send a message to gangsters that law enforcement is committed to working together to take you off the streets.”

Richard T. Garcia, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI for the region, stated: “This case demonstrates the success in combating gang violence made possible when law enforcement at all levels share intelligence and combine resources. This cooperative effort will continue to be utilized to best serve the community, as we maintain our efforts to thwart violent gangs in our neighborhoods.”

Santa Ana Police Chief Paul M. Walters said of today’s announcement: “The arrest of these dangerous and violent criminals who have engaged in an on-going pattern of organized crime will have a significant impact on narcotic and gang activity throughout Orange County.”

John A. Torres, Special Agent in Charge of the ATF office in Los Angeles, said: “ATF’s primary focus remains protecting the public and reducing violent crime. We will continue to participate with local, state and other federal agencies in an effort to disrupt organized crime.”

Richard Rimmer, Assistant Director of the California Department of Corrections, said: "The Department's Special Services Unit works with law enforcement throughout the state to prevent prison gangs from establishing a foothold in our communities. Today, a large, highly organized and violent criminal gang is behind bars. Tomorrow, someone will try to take their place, and all of these agencies will be back out there to stop them."

The indictment alleges that 16 of the defendants participated in a conspiracy to violate the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, commonly called RICO. The RICO charge alleges dozens of overt acts that members of the organization committed to expand the power and control of the enterprise. Detailing conduct in 2004 and early 2005, the RICO count accuses Peter Ojeda and others of, for example, demanding taxes from numerous street gangs and others who wanted to distribute drugs in Orange County, coordinating the collection of taxes from jail inmates who were selling drugs, and ordering assaults for failing to pay taxes or for showing disrespect to the Ojeda Organization. Assaults were conducted when a "green light" was placed on the offending gang or gang member, meaning the gang or gang member would be assaulted by members of the Ojeda Organization or those doing its bidding.

The Ojeda Organization required Hispanic criminal street gangs in Orange County to pay money as a "tax" or "tribute" on a regular basis, the indictment alleges. The Ojeda Organization permitted the tax-paying gangs and gang members to exert influence over their neighborhoods and territories. The Ojeda Organization disciplined Orange County criminal street gangs and their members who engaged in unsanctioned violence, such as a drive-by shooting, which could cause increased law enforcement attention and thereby threaten the income of the Ojeda Organization.

Those named in the RICO count are:

- Peter Ojeda, 63 of La Habra;
- Marco Diaz, 31, of Santa Ana, who was a leader of the Ojeda Organization;
- Jose Becerra, 38, of Placentia, the third leader of the Ojeda Organization;
- Rafael Torres, 31, of Santa Ana;
- David Melgoza Jr., 37, of Santa Ana;
- Anthony Lebron, 40, of Santa Ana;
- Ramon Meza Jr., 31, of Santa Ana;
- Abraham Magallon, 29, of Placentia;
- Jose Arvizu, 31, of Anaheim;
- Oscar Ruiz, 25, of Santa Ana;
- Jose Ruiz, 25, of Santa Ana;
- Ismael Esquivel, 49, of Anaheim;
- Mario Saucedo, 29, of Santa Ana;
- Orlando Alvarado, 22, of Santa Ana;
- Freddie Ojeda, 48, of Santa Ana; and
- Frank Nerida, 35, of Anaheim.

The RICO charges carries a maximum statutory penalty of 20 years in federal prison.

Count two of the indictment alleges a conspiracy to distribute narcotics. This Count charges six members of the Ojeda Organization and 13 others who are not part Of that enterprise. The narcotics conspiracy count charges Peter Ojeda, Diaz, Magallon, Arvizu, Oscar Ruiz, Saucedo and:

- David Trujillo, 32, of Santa Ana;
- Arthur Duran, 34, of Garden Grove;
- Robert Ocampo, 29, of Anaheim;
- Freddie Luevano, 36, of Santa Ana;
- Abel Azevedo, 34, of Santa Ana;
- Joseph Castro, 35, of Foothill Ranch;
- Lawrence Morales, 35, of Anaheim;
- Long Nguyen, 29, of Orange;
- Robert Cervantes, 30, of Santa Ana;
- Jose Martinez, 31, of Santa Ana;
- Sandra Flores, 29, of Santa Ana;
- Diego Moreno, 39, of Fullerton; and
- Mia Rodriguez, 25, of Orange.

The drug trafficking conspiracy charge carries a maximum statutory penalty of life in prison.

Count 3 of the indictment charges Peter Ojeda alone with distribution of methamphetamine, a charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years

and could bring a sentence of up to life in prison.

A list detailing which defendants were arrested, are in custody and are considered to be fugitives was made available at today's press conference.

An indictment contains allegations that a defendant has committed a crime. Every defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

The defendants arrested this morning will be making their initial court appearances this afternoon in United States District Court in Santa Ana. Federal prosecutors intend on seeking writs for the defendant who are in state court custody to remove them to federal custody.

"The city of Santa Ana and County of Orange are very grateful to the Task Force for making our community a much safer place," said Santa Ana Mayor Miguel Pulido.

This case is the product of a two-year investigation by the Santa Ana Gang Task Force, which is made up of officers from the Santa Ana Police Department; special agents with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; and investigators with the California Department of Corrections.

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