



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Shana Jones, Special Assistant
Daryl Fields, Public Information Officer
(210) 384-7440

April 20, 2005

FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS FOUR MEXICAN MAFIA MEMBERS ON ALL COUNTS

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that a federal jury in San Antonio convicted four Texas Mexican Mafia members on drug, money laundering and firearm charges.

Jurors convicted Juan Victor "Smiley" Valles, Jimmy "Panson" Zavala, Johnny "Gira" Garcia-Esparza and Sammy "Spiderman" Garcia of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute a controlled substance and conspiracy to commit money laundering. In addition: Valles and Garcia were convicted of possession with intent to distribute heroin and possession of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime; Zavala was convicted of possession with intent to distribute cocaine and three counts of possession of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime; and, Garcia-Esparza was convicted of four counts of possession with intent to distribute heroin and two counts of possession of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime.

"Today's convictions are another blow to the Mexican Mafia. Law enforcement in San Antonio will continue to lower to boom on these dangerous criminals," stated United States Attorney Johnny Sutton.

For five years beginning in August 1999, the defendants conspired with others to: 1) obtain large amounts of heroin and cocaine for further distribution and sale; 2) control the distribution of heroin and cocaine by restricting drug trafficking among non-Texas Mexican Mafia members to those who paid extortion fees or a "tax;" 3) protect "authorized" drug distributors from robbery, violence and competition; and, 4) use violence in all forms and degrees to enforce the Texas Mexican Mafia drug distribution "tax."

During the time of the conspiracy, authorities estimate that the organization was responsible for distributing well over 150 kilograms of cocaine and well over 30 kilograms of heroin. During the investigation, authorities also seized approximately 80 firearms and approximately \$50,000 in cash. Twenty-four (24) defendants named in this indictment pled guilty to federal charges prior to trial.

This Organized Crime/Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) case resulted from a year-long investigation conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force and the Bexar County Sheriff's Department with assistance from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

- more -

Texas Mexican Mafia convictions
April 20, 2005
Page 2

The DEA Task Force is comprised of law enforcement officers from the San Antonio Regional Narcotics Task Force, San Antonio Police Department, Comal County Sheriff's Office, Guadalupe County Sheriff's Office, Kerr County Sheriff's Office, Kerrville Task Force, Leon Valley Police Department, New Braunfels Police Department, Schertz Police Department, Seguin Police Department and the Bexar County District Attorney's Office. Assistant United States Attorneys Joey Contreras and Joe Sepeda are prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

#####