



**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 19, 2005

On the web: www.usdoj.gov/usao/txw/index.html

**HERIBERTO SANTILLAN-TABARES SENTENCED TO
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS IN PRISON AFTER PLEADING GUILTY TO
FEDERAL CONTINUING CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE CHARGE**

U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that 51-year-old Heriberto Santillan-Tabares was sentenced this morning to 25 years in federal prison after pleading guilty to conducting a continuing criminal enterprise.

Appearing before Senior United States District Judge Harry Lee Hudspeth in San Antonio, Texas, this morning, Santillan-Tabares pled guilty to count Seven of the indictment. The government dismissed all remaining charges against Santillan-Tabares as part of a plea agreement.

Santillan-Tabares was a member of the Vicente Carrillo-Fuentes drug trafficking organization. According to the indictment, he was responsible for the importation of considerable quantities of cocaine and marijuana into the United States. By his guilty plea, Santillan-Tabares admitted that he served as a leader or organizer in the organization, in charge of five or more other participants, and that he received substantial resources from the drug trafficking operation. The offense carried a mandatory sentence of at least 20 years in prison.

Santillan-Tabares and others charged in the indictment were alleged to have been responsible for a number of murders that occurred. As part of the resolution of the case, those charges were dismissed.

U.S. Attorney Sutton explained that the twenty-five year sentence imposed on Santillan-Tabares effectively takes him off the street and removes him from the drug organization and the drug trade for the rest of his life. Santillan-Tabares' sentence is not subject to parole. In dropping the additional charges in exchange for Santillan-Tabares' guilty plea, Sutton said that Mexico has a superior interest in prosecuting those responsible. All of the murders were committed in Ciudad Juarez, by Mexican citizens, including law enforcement officials, and all of the victims were citizens of Mexico. While much of the evidence relating to the murders is from Mexico, Sutton said his office would share with Mexican authorities any evidence developed in the United States.

This case was investigated by the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement with assistance from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the El Paso County Sheriff's Department.

#####