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FOURTEEN DEFENDANTS FACING FEDERAL OR STATE CHARGES INVOLVING COCAINE SALES IN LAKE COUNTY'S ROUND LAKE BEACH AREA

CHICAGO — Fourteen Lake County and area residents are facing narcotics charges after a joint state and federal investigation of alleged cocaine-trafficking in the Round Lake and Round Lake Beach areas, state and federal law enforcement officials announced today. FBI agents, together with local police and other authorities, yesterday began executing arrest warrants for six federal defendants and eight state defendants resulting from an investigation that began in August 2010. Since then, investigators have seized more than 1.3 kilograms of cocaine as part of the investigation, which is continuing. Officers and agents also executed a seizure warrant yesterday for a 2008 Cadillac Escalade from one of the federal defendants.

The arrests and charges were announced by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Michael J. Waller, Lake County State's Attorney; and Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The investigation was conducted under the umbrella of U.S. Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF).

Also participating in the investigation were the Lake County Metropolitan Enforcement Group, the Round Lake Beach and Rolling Meadows police departments, as well as the police departments of Palatine and Mundelein and the McHenry County Sheriff's Police through their membership on the North Suburban Safe Streets Task Force, the Illinois State Police, the Department of Homeland Security and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

FBI agents and local authorities began investigating lead defendant **Jose Luis Chavez** and his alleged drug-trafficking organization, which operated principally in the northern suburbs of Chicago. The investigation included at least three seizures of cocaine, court-authorized electronic surveillance on various telephones, and extensive physical surveillance. The federal complaint traces the movement of cocaine through excerpts of the defendants' numerous, intercepted telephone conversations. Between February and November 2011, Chavez allegedly obtained ounce and kilogram quantities of cocaine that he distributed in multi-ounce quantities through his primary distributor, **Armando Lopez**, in and around Round Lake and Round Lake Beach in Lake County, according to the charges.

Chavez, also known as "Big Lou," 33, of Round Lake, and Lopez, aka "Mando," 34, of Round Lake Beach, were among six defendants charged with conspiracy to distribute cocaine in a criminal complaint that was unsealed yesterday in U.S. District Court in Chicago. Chavez and Lopez appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Susan E. Cox and remain in federal custody pending a detention hearing at 11 a.m. on Monday.

A third federal defendant, **Joseph Garcia**, aka "Evil," 28, of Algonquin, was arrested yesterday in Orlando, Fla. He appeared in Federal Court there and is being returned to Chicago.

A fourth defendant, **Amber Learn**, 26, of Round Lake Beach, was arrested in Lake County and was released on bond after appearing before Magistrate Cox.

Two additional federal defendants, **Ryon Baldarez**, 35, and **Agustin Zetina-Marin**, 29, both of Round Lake Beach, remain at large and warrants were issued for their arrest.

Eight additional defendants are facing state prosecution on drug charges in Lake County.

According to the federal complaint, after receiving cocaine from Chavez, Lopez redistributed it through Learn and Baldarez, who were responsible for delivering the cocaine to Lopez's customers. Lopez allegedly brokered kilogram -cocaine deals for Chavez by connecting Chavez with various sources of supply. Chavez allegedly distributed his cocaine through Lopez, as well as through Garcia and Zetina-Marin.

The largest seizure during the investigation occurred on May 31, 2011, when law enforcement recovered approximately a kilogram of cocaine during a traffic stop on I-94 near Deerfield Road, which was allegedly en route to be delivered to Chavez.

The drug distribution conspiracy charge carries a mandatory minimum sentence of five years and a maximum of 40 years in prison and a \$5 million fine. If convicted, the Court must impose a reasonable sentence under federal statutes and the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The government is being represented by Assistant United States Attorneys Renai Rodney, Dylan Smith and Naana Frimpong.

The public is reminded that a complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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