

Convictions of Members of Transnational Criminal Organizations and their Subsidiaries

April - June 2017

The Attorney General has repeatedly affirmed that the prosecution of transnational criminal organizations is one of the highest priorities of the Department of Justice. Presidential Executive Order 13773, on Enforcing Federal Law with Respect to Transnational Criminal Organizations and Preventing International Trafficking, states that these groups “threaten[] the safety of the United States and its citizens” and “derive revenue through widespread illegal conduct, including acts of violence and abuse that exhibit a wanton disregard for human life.”

This report is provided in accordance with Section 3(g) of the Executive Order, which states that “*in the interest of transparency and public safety, and in compliance with all applicable law, including the Privacy Act, issue reports at least once per quarter detailing convictions in the United States relating to transnational criminal organizations and their subsidiaries.*” This report provides information pertaining to convictions for the period beginning April 1, 2017, and ending June 30, 2017.

According to case data collected by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF)¹, 476 members of transnational criminal organizations and their subsidiaries were convicted of federal offenses during the third quarter of 2017. Furthermore, additional reporting on convictions occurring during the previous quarter raised the number of convictions of members of transnational criminal organizations and their subsidiaries during that time period to 754. In addition to the OCDETF cases, the Criminal Division reports the conviction of 30 defendants in transnational organized crime cases in the third quarter of 2017.² In all, therefore, the Department of Justice has reported the conviction of 1,260 members of transnational criminal organizations and their subsidiaries since January 1 of this year.

Examples of convictions in cases occurring in the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2017 include:

In April, a member of MS-13’s Eastside Loco Salvatrucha clique in the metropolitan Boston area pleaded guilty in federal court in Boston to drug-related charges. The defendant, an El Salvadorian national living in Chelsea and Pittsfield, Massachusetts, was one of 61 defendants named in a superseding indictment targeting the criminal activities of alleged leaders, members, and associates of MS-13. He pleaded guilty to conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity, more commonly referred to as RICO conspiracy, and conspiracy to distribute cocaine. The plea agreement recommends that the defendant be sentenced to 87 months in prison. He will also be subject to deportation upon completion of his sentence. FBI

¹ OCDETF member agencies include, in addition to the federal prosecutors, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the State Department’s Diplomatic Security Service, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Inspector General, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, the U.S. Marshals Service, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the U.S. Secret Service.

² Other Department of Justice case reporting systems were adjusted during this quarter to better capture data relevant to this quarterly report. Data gathered under the adjusted system will be included in future reports. In addition, OCDETF’s information systems have added data fields to provide more complete identification of cases targeting transnational criminal organizations.

led the investigation with assistance from the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) and local law enforcement.

In April, a man from El Paso, Texas was sentenced to 35 years in prison for his leadership role in a drug trafficking organization responsible for thousands of kilograms of marijuana smuggled from Guadalajara, Mexico to El Paso and Dumas, Texas, and then distributed to locations in the Midwest. In addition to his prison term, the judge ordered the defendant to pay a money judgment of \$36,975,000 and to forfeit assets seized by the government valued at more than \$3 million. DEA, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division (IRS-CID) led the investigation with assistance from FBI and local law enforcement.

In April, in the Eastern District of Virginia, two individuals were sentenced to 20 years' and 10 years' imprisonment, respectively, for their involvement in an international drug trafficking conspiracy. In two separate instances, a Panamanian drug trafficking organization shipped a total of 37 kilograms of cocaine on commercial shipping vessels that docked in Port of Charleston, South Carolina. There the defendants took possession of the cocaine and distributed it domestically. DEA and HSI worked with local law enforcement on this case.

In April, after being a fugitive for over a decade, a former high-ranking Haitian National Police officer pleaded guilty in the Southern District of Florida to laundering cash payments he received from the proceeds of drug sales. Over the course of approximately four years, while serving with the Haitian National Police, the defendant accepted bribes to provide protection for shipments of drugs and drug proceeds traveling from Haiti to Miami, Florida. DEA and IRS-CID led the investigation with assistance from FBI, USMS, and HSI.

In April, a Bensenville, Illinois woman pleaded guilty to conspiracy for her role in a heroin distribution organization. Her boyfriend ran a stash house and sold heroin in the Chicago area for a Mexican-based drug trafficking organization. Her plea was part of a larger case against a Mexico-to-Chicago smuggling operation that has resulted in drug charges against 19 defendants and the seizure of more than 190 kilograms of heroin. DEA led the investigation with assistance from HSI, IRS-CID, USMS, and local law enforcement.

In April, a Pakistani citizen pleaded guilty in the District of Columbia to his role in a scheme to smuggle undocumented migrants from Pakistan through Brazil and Central America into the United States. The case was investigated by HSI with assistance from the FBI, the Diplomatic Security Service, the Brazilian Federal Police, and Customs and Border Protection.

In May, a Southern District of Florida jury convicted two defendants who were members of a Miami-based drug trafficking organization on drug charges. The organization shipped kilos of heroin from Mexico to a distribution point in Atlanta, Georgia, where they were picked up and transported to Miami for further distribution. The two defendants are part of a larger case in which 47 defendants charged in four separate indictments in January 2016 are awaiting trial. ATF and DEA led the investigation with assistance from FBI, USMS, and local law enforcement.

In May, a Spokane, Washington man was sentenced to 30 years in prison after pleading guilty to trafficking methamphetamine and heroin, possessing and using firearms in connection with drug trafficking, as well as intimidating and threatening witnesses. The defendant is a part

of a drug trafficking organization that sold drugs smuggled from Mexico into Arizona and California. The organization transported the drugs to Central and Eastern Washington as well as Ohio, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Canada. This investigation resulted in the seizure of 15 kilograms of methamphetamine, 3 kilograms of heroin, and multiple firearms. DEA led the investigation with assistance from FBI, HSI, and local law enforcement.

In May, a Ukrainian hacker was sentenced to 30 months in prison and ordered to pay over \$3 million in restitution for his role in an international scheme to hack into three business newswires, steal yet-to-be-published press releases containing non-public financial information, and use that information to make trades that generated approximately \$30 million in illegal profits. The case was investigated by the U.S. Secret Service with assistance from the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission.

In June, a Key West, Florida jury convicted three defendants on one count each of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine. In 2016, the U.S. Coast Guard came upon two vessels in international waters off the coast of Costa Rica. After pursuing and apprehending the vessels, the Coast Guard seized 640 kilograms of cocaine. The defendants are part of a Colombian-based drug trafficking and money laundering organization capable of smuggling tons of cocaine into the United States. DEA worked with the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Border Patrol, and local law enforcement on this case.

In June, a Mexican national pleaded guilty in the Southern District of Texas to possession with intent to distribute in excess of 1000 kilograms of marijuana. The defendant was the head of a drug trafficking organization responsible for transporting and distributing marijuana between Laredo and Dallas, Texas. His Mexican sources of supply coordinated the smuggling of the marijuana from Mexico to Laredo. The defendant and his co-conspirators solicited commercial shipping companies to transport trailers containing the marijuana and cover loads of merchandise. In May, his three co-conspirators pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute marijuana. DEA and HSI worked on this investigation together with the U.S. Border Patrol.

In June, a Dominican national pleaded guilty in the District of Massachusetts for his involvement in supplying heroin and fentanyl to traffickers in Taunton, Massachusetts and surrounding areas. The defendant brought heroin, originally sourced from Mexico, from Lawrence to supply distributors in Taunton, Fall River, and other locations in Massachusetts. The 15-month investigation into this heroin and fentanyl trafficking organization led to the indictment of 26 defendants. Twenty defendants have pleaded guilty and nine have already been sentenced. DEA worked this investigation with IRS-CID and local law enforcement.

In June, a Haverhill, Massachusetts man was sentenced to 6 years in prison for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute oxycodone and cocaine, and conspiracy to possess a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence. The drug trafficking organization operated in northern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, and obtained its drugs from sources in El Paso, Texas, Costa Rica, and Mexico. The defendant is one of six individuals who pleaded guilty to their role in this drug trafficking operation. DEA worked with ATF, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and local law enforcement on this case.

In June, a federal judge in the Eastern District of Texas sentenced a Houston, Texas man to 30 years in prison for his involvement in a methamphetamine trafficking operation. The

defendant received large quantities of methamphetamine directly from a Mexican cartel in liquid form. The defendant converted the methamphetamine to crystal form in Houston prior to distributing it to Beaumont, Texas. DEA worked with HSI, USMS, U.S. Border Patrol, and local law enforcement on this case.

In June, two brothers, both longtime members of the Bloods street gang in New York City, were sentenced to federal prison for distribution of heroin and use of violence to protect their drug distribution territory. One brother was sentenced to 11 years in prison for distributing more than one kilogram of heroin, while the other was sentenced to 25 years in prison in connection with a 2005 drug-related murder in Paterson, New Jersey. This OCDETF case targeted and dismantled a Regional Priority Organization Target. FBI led the investigation with assistance from USMS and local law enforcement.

In April, May, and June, nine individuals pleaded guilty in the Southern District of Texas to their roles in a complex scheme in which individuals in call centers in Ahmedabad, India, impersonated officials from the IRS and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, among other telephone call scams. The callers threatened victims with arrest, imprisonment, fines, or deportation if they did not pay alleged monies owed to the government. The call centers utilized a network of "runners" based in the U.S. to pick up payments from the victims and launder the funds. This investigation was led by HSI, the Department of Homeland Security Inspector General's Office, and the U.S. Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration.