Oct 12, 2022

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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Gang Member Busts Seizes 50+ Pounds of Fentanyl



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement shut down a major drug trafficking organization operated by gang members affiliated with Mexican drug cartels. Attorney General Moody's Statewide Prosecutors are charging 25 defendants, including SUR-13 gang members, with multiple felony counts related to drug trafficking, violent criminal acts and conspiracy.

According to an investigation by the FDLE, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations and Hendry County Sheriff's Office, members of the SUR 13 gang, also known as Sureños, operated a drug trafficking organization from behind bars. Authorities seized more than 50 pounds, or 23 kilograms, of fentanyl—enough to kill more than 11 million Floridians, approximately half the state's population.

This case, combined with several other drug busts over the past few months, brings the total amount of fentanyl seized in Florida to nearly 85 pounds, enough to kill everyone in 66 of Florida's 67 counties.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "In just a few months' time, authorities have seized enough fentanyl to wipe out the combined populations of 66 of Florida's 67 counties—more than 19 million people! The prevalence of this dangerous substance poses a critical threat not only to the wellbeing of the citizens of our state but also our nation. Until President Biden takes action to address the border crisis that is emboldening Mexican drug cartels to bring record amounts of these dangerous substances across the border—fentanyl will continue to kill tens of thousands of Americans every year."

According to the investigation, incarcerated leaders of SUR-13 operated a drug trafficking

operation from within Florida prisons. At times, working with fellow gangs MS-13 and the Latin Kings, the criminal organization's ruling body—called the Mesa—authorized member requests to execute other inmates and continue the distribution of drugs sourced from Mexico and California. Using contraband cellphones, members of SUR-13 would contact each other from different prisons throughout the state, including Brevard, Charlotte, Holmes and Miami-Dade counties. Gang members also kept contact with area drug dealers outside the prisons to facilitate drug shipments and deliveries.

Over the course of the investigation, authorities seized more than 50 pounds, or 23.59 kilograms, of fentanyl, 380 pounds, or 172.37 kilograms, of methamphetamines, approximately five pounds, or 2.2 kilograms, of cocaine, approximately one pound, or 566 grams, of oxycodone, one pound, or 453.6 grams, of black tar heroin and a half pound, or 226.8 grams, of morphine.

Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Mark Glass said, "These suspects were arrested on a combined 64 first degree felony counts. The violence was often used to protect and further their large drug trafficking operation in southwest Florida. Investigators seized nearly 50 pounds of fentanyl, thousands of fentanyl pills and hundreds of pounds of methamphetamines. There is no question that lives have been saved in Florida because of this case."

Hendry County Sheriff Steve Whidden said, "We may be a smaller agency in comparison to some, but we have a staff that I will stand next to any large agency and be confident in their abilities. My narcotics unit is exceptionally adept at targeting major drug traffickers. When you couple that with the assistance of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Office of Attorney General Ashley Moody, we become a powerful force in combating drug dealers as witnessed in this operation that began in Hendry County. The criminal element needs to understand; if they set up in Hendry County, we will find them and eliminate them."

Homeland Security Investigations Tampa Special Agent in Charge John Condon said, "Transnational gang activity involving violence and the smuggling of dangerous narcotics such as fentanyl, cocaine, and methamphetamines, is a terminal societal disease that turns American streets into war zones. It destroys the fabric of law and order if left unchecked. Gang violence endangers communities across the nation and cannot be tolerated. Alongside our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, we will not sit idly by or turn a blind eye to the atrocities these bullies perpetrate in our communities, putting innocent citizens in the cross fire."

FBI Tampa Division Special Agent in Charge David Walker said, "This investigation highlights the multi-agency teamwork that is necessary to dismantle violent gangs preying on our communities. Our communities are safer today as a result of the hard work and commitment by state, local, and federal law enforcement to protect and serve."

Florida Department of Corrections Secretary Ricky Dixon said, "These arrests underscore the dangers of cell phones in prison. Cell phones, like the ones used in this operation, open the door to a multitude of criminal enterprises and compromise the safety of our communities and our facilities. FDC has thousands of dedicated professional employees committed to disrupting these criminal networks and working collaboratively with law enforcement to protect Floridians."

Attorney General Moody's Statewide Prosecutors are charging 25 defendants with 64 total felony counts, including: racketeering; trafficking in amphetamine, trafficking in fentanyl; trafficking in cocaine; trafficking in oxycodone; trafficking in illegal drugs, to wit: morphine; conspiracy to commit racketeering; conspiracy to traffic in amphetamine; conspiracy to traffic in fentanyl; conspiracy to traffic in heroin; conspiracy to traffic in cocaine; conspiracy to commit first degree murder to further the interests of a criminal gang; conspiracy to commit aggravated battery upon a person who is being detained in a prison, jail or other detention facility to further the interests of a criminal gang; and directing the activities of a criminal gang. Each count is a first-degree felony or higher.

The defendants are: Hugo E. Cruz, aka Houdini; Carlos H. Martinez, aka Carlos Maya-Reyes, aka Indio; Rachel Gonzalez, aka Loka; Adolfo Magana, Jr.; Brayn L. Trejo; Dennis A. Perkins; Reba B. Perkins; Juan Carlos Cruz, aka Spider, aka Arana; Joseph W. Whitehead, Jr.; Juan S. Guijosa, Jr.; Omar Hernandez; Valentin Gomez; Esmeralda Guevara; Andres Bustamante; Johnny Cisnero; Franklin Guillen Lara; Jose Francisco Ramirez, aka Chico; Ruben Quinones, aka Yago; Efren Berumen, aka Brownie, aka Brown Aguila; Jonathan Martinez aka J-Blue; Stephanie Martinez, aka Lady Blue; Thomas E. Busby, II, aka Gutta; Mary Osorio; Jose F. Martinez, aka Guapo; Gregory Enegess, aka Poet.

FDLE is the lead law enforcement agency making arrests in this case.

Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Tim Donnelly of Attorney General Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution will prosecute the case.

Additional fentanyl cases from around the state from the past few months include:

- Oct. 10, Hernando County Sheriff's Deputies seized 1.2 pounds of fentanyl;
- Sept. 21, Clay County Sheriff's Deputies seized 8.35 kilograms of fentanyl;
- Sept. 20, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office seized 3 kilograms of fentanyl;
- Sept. 16, Flagler County Sheriff's Office seized 219 grams of fentanyl;
- Sept. 8, Fort Walton Beach Police and Okaloosa County Sheriff's Deputies seized 48.6 grams of fentanyl;
- Aug. 19, Central Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area task force members seized 192 grams of fentanyl;
- Aug. 11, Palm Bay Police officers seized 412.7 grams of fentanyl;
- Aug 4, Hernando County Sheriff's Deputies seized 252.9 grams of fentanyl;
- July 28, Lake County Sheriff's Deputies seized 2 pounds of fentanyl;
- July 14, Flagler County Sheriff's Deputies seized 180 grams of fentanyl; and
- June 2, Lee County Sheriff's Deputies seized 0.5 kilograms of fentanyl.

Attorney General Moody continues to warn Floridians that just one pill laced with fentanyl can kill. For more information about the dangers of drug use, check out DoseOfRealityFL.com.