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10 SENTENCED FOR INVOLVEMENT IN STRAW PURCHASE AND EXPORT RING

McALLEN, Texas – Ten people have been sentenced today for their roles in making false statement on the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) forms 4473 in the acquisition of firearms from federal firearms licensees (FFL) and exporting those firearms to Mexico, United States Attorney Kenneth Magidson announced today.

Chief United States District Judge Ricardo H. Hinojosa handed down sentences today for Jose Alberto Rios, 43, Daisy Yesenia Santos, 24, Roxana Perez, 31, and Jose Alberto Trevino, 27, all of Roma, Texas; Josefina Guzman, 36, a Mexican national illegally residing in the United States; Juan Antonio Avalos, 25, Siboney Hinojosa Navarro, 34, and Jose Angel Celedon, 27, all of Rio Grande City, Texas; and Jeniffer Lopez, 30, of Garciasville, Texas.

Rios, Guzman, Avalos, Trevino, Perez and Celedon will serve 51, 30, 33, 36, 25 and 24 months, respectively, while Santos, Navarro and Lopez will all serve five months in prison. The prison terms will each be followed by either a two or three-year-term of supervised release. Santos and Hinojosa will also have to serve an additional five months of home confinement after they are released from prison. Navarro Eluid Saenz, 25, of Roma, Texas, was sentenced to three years probation with six months of home confinement as he played the smallest of the roles and purchased only two firearms.

The defendants each pleaded guilty to making, or aiding and abetting the making of, false statements in the acquisition of firearms from FFLs, commonly referred to as straw purchasing.

According to the record of the case, ATF agents received information that the defendants had been purchasing large numbers of firearms highly desired by the Mexican Cartels. Over a five-month period, Rios recruited Guzman to act as a recruiter. Guzman, in turn, recruited Navarro who straw purchased four firearms and Saenz who straw purchased two firearms. Rios also recruited Perez who straw purchased five firearms. Santos, who was recruited by an unindicted co-conspirator, purchased eight firearms. Avalos, Trevino and Celedon, who were all recruited by another unindicted co-conspirator, purchased 18, seven and 11 firearms, respectively. In total, this represents approximately 55 firearms. Evidence demonstrated that all of these firearms were purchased for Oscar Bravo Hernandez who was sentenced to 84 months in prison by Chief United States District Judge Ricardo H. Hinojosa on Dec. 20, 2011, for the unlawful export of munitions from the United States in a related case.

Avalos, Santos, Navarro and Lopez are on bond and have been ordered to voluntarily surrender on April 25, 2012, to begin serving their respective prison sentences. The others have been and will remain in custody pending transfer to a U.S. Bureau of Prison facility in the near future where they will serve their sentences. The investigation was conducted by ATF. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Steven Schammel.

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