



# Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office  
Southern District of Texas

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## **Members of Ring Convicted of Lying to Buy Firearms Bound for Mexico Sentenced**

McALLEN, Texas – Eight members of ring convicted of lying to buy firearms bound for Mexico have been sentenced to prison terms, United States Attorney José Angel Moreno announced today.

United States District Judge Randy Crane sentenced Juan Manuel Barrientos -Lopez, 29, an undocumented alien from Mexico; Andres Alvarez, 24, of Alamo, Texas; Armando Bravo II, aka Peanut, 22, Romulo Longoria, 21, Greg Palacios, 19, and Ruben Ramirez III, 20, all of San Juan, Texas; as well as Alan Ramirez, 20, and Michael Anthony Salazar, 20, both of McAllen, to varying prison terms for their roles in a straw purchasing scheme to acquire firearms bound for Mexico. All eight men pleaded guilty on various dates in March and April 2011 to lying on the ATF Form 4473 when they falsely represented themselves to be the “actual owner” of varying types of semi-automatic weapons they were buying for another earlier this year.

The charges and subsequent convictions are the result of an investigation initiated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) after Alvarez purchased multiple AR15 type rifles in June 2010. Through their investigation, agents learned that Alvarez had been recruited to make the firearm purchases by Bravo because, as convicted felon, Bravo is prohibited by federal law from possessing much less purchasing a firearm. It was later discovered that Alan Ramirez, when he realized that Bravo could not purchase firearms, allegedly recruited Bravo to recruit other straw purchases. Alan Ramirez also recruited Salazar. In addition to his role of a recruiter, Alan Ramirez personally straw purchased 19 firearms for

Barrientos-Lopez. Barrientos-Lopez, who was found to be the head of the straw purchasing ring, was present in the United States illegally and could not possess let alone purchase firearms. In an attempt to satisfy the orders for firearms placed by Barrientos-Lopez, Bravo then recruited Ruben Ramirez, Palacios and Longoria. Bravo obtained cash for each of these "recruits" to purchase the firearms then paid each of them approximately \$200 for each firearm they purchased.

Barrientos-Lopez, originally charged by criminal complaint in October 2010, was taken into custody following a high speed chase after straw purchased firearms had been delivered to him. The other seven defendants were named and charged in various counts of a 14-count superseding indictment returned by a grand jury in January 2011. All eight defendants pleaded guilty to lying to buy a variety of semi-automatic firearms at federally licensed firearms dealers in McAllen, Mission and/or Pharr, Texas, between May and October 2010.

At today's hearing, Judge Crane held Barrientos-Lopez, as the organization's head, responsible for the purchase of a total of 38 AK-47 and AR-15 type rifles purchased by the ring and sentenced him to 60 months in federal prison, the maximum sentence allowed by law. Alvarez was sentenced to 48 months imprisonment, while Bravo received 60 months. Longoria, Palacios, Alan Ramirez and Salazar were each sentenced to 30 months while Ruben Ramirez was sentenced to 33 months. With the exception of Alan Ramirez, who has been permitted to remain on bond until the issuance of an order to surrender to the U.S. Marshals Service on Sept. 6, 2011, all other defendants have been in custody since either arrest or conviction.

All have been further sentenced to serve a three-year-term of supervised release upon completion of their prison terms. Barrientos-Lopez is subject to deportation upon release from prison due to his illegal status in the United States.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven Schammel.