



U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
Southern District of Texas

For Immediate Release
Friday, February 25, 2011

Southern District of Texas

www.justice.gov/usao/txs

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**FEDERAL CHARGES FILED AGAINST ELEVEN
ARRESTED AFTER DISCOVERY AND SEIZURE OF
MARIJUANA, COCAINE, FIREARMS, GRENADES AND
AMMUNITION**

(McALLEN, Texas) — Federal charges of drug-trafficking and illegal weapons-exporting crimes have been filed in U.S. District Court in McAllen, Texas, against a total of 11 defendants arrested earlier this week, United States Attorney José Angel Moreno announced today.

Charged by criminal complaint filed today with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute 3,267 kilograms of marijuana and 66.25 kilograms of cocaine seized from residences on West Gardenia Street and I-J Avenue in McAllen on Wednesday, Feb. 23, are Edgar Daniel Zapata, 30, Francisco Ivan Zapata, 25; Jose Leonso Pecina, 20; Arturo Zapata-Ortiz, 52; Jose Rafael Chavira, 34; Rene Alberto Loera, 38; Santos Isidro De La Paz, 22; Alma San Juana Pecina, 46; and Jose Francisco Padilla, 30. Several of the defendants are undocumented aliens from Mexico; one defendant, Jose Francisco Padilla, is a U.S. citizen from McAllen.

A second complaint filed today also charges Zapata and De La Paz along with Jose David Arturo Reyes-Lopez, 28, and Jose Guadalupe Reyes-Martinez, 48, both Mexican nationals, with unlawful export and attempted export of 1,802 cartridges of .308 caliber ammunition seized from a residence on I-J Avenue in McAllen on Wednesday.

According to the allegations in the criminal complaints, law enforcement agents seized large amounts of illegal drugs and weapons from residences in McAllen on February 23—the day the defendants were arrested. In addition to the marijuana and cocaine, agents also seized several hand grenades; over 1,800 rounds of .308-caliber ammunition; and a high-caliber, belt-fed machinegun, allegedly purchased by Edgar Daniel Zapata for \$9,000.

According to allegations in the criminal complaints filed, the defendants were tasked with assisting in the packaging, storing, transportation, and guarding of the drugs and weapons stored at various residences for the drug- and weapons-trafficking cell allegedly led by Edgar Daniel Zapata. Zapata's cousin, Jose Francisco Padilla—a reserve member of the National Guard – allegedly sold military-style ballistic vests to Zapata. This cell was allegedly affiliated with the Gulf Cartel Drug Trafficking Organization in Mexico and was illegally smuggling weapons to Gulf Cartel members in Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico.

All 11 defendants, in the custody of the United States Marshals Service, appeared before U.S. Magistrate Judge Peter Ormsby in McAllen today. Each has been ordered to remain in federal custody without bond pending preliminary examination and detention hearings scheduled for March 2.

The charges against these 11 defendants are the result of an investigation conducted by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations (ICE-HSI); and the McAllen Police Department (MPD). Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kimberly Leo and Christopher Sully are prosecuting the case.

A complaint or indictment is a formal accusation of criminal conduct, not evidence. A defendant is presumed innocent unless convicted through due process of law.

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