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**FINAL DEFENDANTS SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR ROLES IN
CALIFORNIA-TO-WEST VIRGINIA DRUG CONSPIRACY**

Mexican national gets over 11 years; Los Angeles father and son sentenced with father getting over 11 years and son getting six years

CHARLESTON, W.Va. – Three defendants were sentenced today to federal prison today for their roles in a California-to-West Virginia methamphetamine conspiracy, announced United States Attorney Carol Casto. The defendants sentenced today previously pleaded guilty to conspiracy to distribute more than 50 grams of methamphetamine. Miguel Alejandro Robles-Ibarra, 31, a Mexican national, was sentenced to 11 years and three months in federal prison. Rafael Garcia Serrato, 43, and Cesar Garcia, 20, a father and son from Los Angeles, were also sentenced. Serrato was sentenced to 11 years and three months in federal prison. Garcia was sentenced to six years in federal prison.

Robles-Ibarra admitted that from February 2016 to March 19, 2016, he was involved in a drug conspiracy with multiple individuals. Robles-Ibarra also admitted that near the end of February 2016, he helped package ten pound of crystal methamphetamine in a spare tire in the trunk of a vehicle for transport to Kentucky. Two females involved in the conspiracy drove the vehicle from California to meet Brian Ashby, a codefendant residing in Charleston who traveled to Kentucky to pick up the drugs. Robles-Ibarra also admitted that he received a share of the money paid by Ashby for the drugs. Robles-Ibarra further admitted that in March 2016, he helped package another delivery to Ashby - 10 pounds of crystal methamphetamine concealed in the spare tire of a vehicle, this time for transport from

California to Huntington. Robles-Ibarra never received any money for the March drug shipment because he was arrested in West Virginia where he had traveled to pick up more money from Ashby. Law enforcement found a fingerprint matching Robles-Ibarra on the spare tire in which the crystal methamphetamine was packaged.

Serrato and Garcia admitted that in March 2016, they, along with other codefendants, arranged to transport five pounds of crystal methamphetamine from California to West Virginia. Serrato and Garcia further admitted that they packed a vehicle with the drugs. Serrato and Garcia also admitted that they maintained telephone contact with the vehicle as it traveled to West Virginia to keep apprised of the progress of the drug delivery. Garcia admitted that on March 25, 2016, he flew from Los Angeles to Huntington to collect money for the drugs being delivered to West Virginia. On March 26, 2016, law enforcement stopped the vehicle transporting the crystal methamphetamine in South Charleston and recovered the drugs.

“Although my office remains focused on battling the opiates that are plaguing our communities, we have not lost sight of other equally dangerous drugs,” stated United States Attorney Casto. “These prosecutions should affirm our commitment to fighting drug trafficking organizations regardless of the poison that they peddle.”

This prosecution is the result of a multi-agency investigation that led to an eight-count indictment implicating several defendants and resulting in lengthy prison sentences. For conspiracy to distribute more than 50 grams of methamphetamine, Velarian Sylvester Carter, of Beckley, was sentenced to 20 years, Daniel Ortiz-Rivera, a Mexican national, was sentenced to 12 years and seven months, Miguel Tafolla-Montoya, a Mexican national, was sentenced to 10 years and 11 months, and Brian Ashby, of Kanawha County, was sentenced to four and a half years. Kelly Newcomb, of Nevada, and Danielle Dessaray Estrada, of Los Angeles, were both sentenced to a year and a day for interstate travel in furtherance of a drug crime. Marco Antonio Bojorquez-Rojas, a Mexican national residing in California, was sentenced to a year and a half for interstate travel in furtherance of a drug crime.

The FBI, Homeland Security Investigations, the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Charleston Police Department, and the Metropolitan Drug Enforcement Network Team conducted the investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Jennifer Rada Herralld is in charge of these prosecutions. United States District Judge John T. Copenhaver, Jr., imposed the sentences and presided over these cases.

These cases are being prosecuted as part of an ongoing effort led by the United States Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of West Virginia to combat the illicit sale and misuse of illegal drugs, including methamphetamine. The U.S. Attorney’s Office, joined by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, is committed to aggressively pursuing and shutting down pill trafficking, eliminating open air drug markets, and curtailing the spread of illegal drugs in communities across the Southern District.

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