



PRESS RELEASE

Governor Of Sinaloa And Nine Other Current And Former Mexican Officials Charged With Drug Trafficking And Weapons Offenses

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Southern District
of New York

The Defendants Allegedly Conspired With Leaders of the Sinaloa Cartel to Import Massive Quantities of Narcotics Into the United States in Exchange for Political Support and Bribes

United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Jay Clayton, and Administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”), Terrance C. Cole, announced today the unsealing of an indictment charging RUBEN ROCHA MOYA, ENRIQUE INZUNZA CAZAREZ, ENRIQUE DIAZ VEGA, DAMASO CASTRO ZAAVEDRA, MARCO ANTONIO ALMANZA AVILES, ALBERTO JORGE CONTRERAS NUNEZ, a/k/a “Cholo,” GERARDO MERIDA SANCHEZ, JOSE ANTONIO DIONISIO HIPOLITO, a/k/a “Tornado,” JUAN DE DIOS GAMEZ MENDIVIL, and JUAN VALENZUELA MILLAN, a/k/a “Juanito,” with drug trafficking and related weapons offenses. MILLAN is additionally charged with offenses related to his participation in kidnappings of a DEA source and the source’s relative that resulted in their deaths. The defendants are all current or former high-ranking government and law enforcement officials in the Mexican State

of Sinaloa (“Sinaloa”), including the current Governor of Sinaloa, RUBEN ROCHA MOYA, and are alleged to have partnered with the Sinaloa Cartel to distribute massive quantities of narcotics to the United States. The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge Katherine Polk Failla.

“The Sinaloa Cartel is a ruthless criminal organization that has flooded this community with dangerous drugs for decades,” said U.S. Attorney Jay Clayton. “As the indictment lays bare, the Sinaloa Cartel, and other drug trafficking organizations like it, would not operate as freely or successfully without corrupt politicians and law enforcement officials on their payroll. The support of corrupt foreign officials for deadly trafficking of drugs must end. Let these charges send a clear message to all officials around the globe who work with narco-traffickers: no matter your title or position, we are committed to bringing you to justice.”

“The Sinaloa Cartel is not just trafficking deadly drugs, it is a designated terrorist organization that relies on corruption and bribery to drive violence and profit,” said DEA Administrator Terrance Cole. “This indictment exposes a deliberate effort to undermine public institutions and put American lives at risk. The defendants allegedly used positions of trust to protect cartel operations, enabling a pipeline of deadly drugs into our country. No one is above the law. We are grateful for our U.S. and Mexican partners who choose integrity every day and stand with us to safeguard our communities. Together, we will continue to apply sustained pressure against the Sinaloa Cartel and the networks that support it to protect the American people and save lives.”

According to the allegations contained in the Indictment, other court filings, and statements made during court proceedings:[\[1\]](#)

The Sinaloa Cartel (the “Cartel”) is one of the most violent criminal organizations in the world and has transformed the Mexican State of Sinaloa into the geographic epicenter of the global narcotics trade. From its home base in Sinaloa, the Cartel has worked with criminal elements around the world – cocaine producers and distributors in Colombia and Venezuela, drug traffickers and corrupt politicians throughout Central and South America, and precursor chemical manufacturers in China and elsewhere – to distribute massive quantities of narcotics into the United States and inflict severe damage on communities throughout this country. The Cartel has also carried out rampant violence, including thousands of murders, throughout Mexico and elsewhere around the world, including in the United States.

To protect and grow this drug trafficking empire, the Cartel has allegedly partnered with corrupt politicians and law enforcement officials, including the defendants, who have abused their authority in support of the Cartel, exposed and subjected victims to threats and violence, and sold out their offices in exchange for massive bribes. Indeed, certain police officials in Mexico, including, as alleged, certain of the defendants, have directly participated in the Cartel's violence and retribution, including by murdering enemies of the Cartel and kidnapping individuals in Mexico suspected of cooperating with U.S. law enforcement in this investigation.

The defendants charged in this Indictment are current and former government or law enforcement officials in Sinaloa. As alleged, each of the defendants has participated in a corrupt and violent drug trafficking conspiracy with the Cartel to import massive amounts of fentanyl, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine from Mexico into the United States. The defendants have played a variety of essential roles for the Cartel: among other things, the defendants have allegedly shielded Cartel leaders from investigation, arrest, and prosecution; caused sensitive law enforcement and military information to be provided to members of the Cartel and allied drug traffickers to assist the Cartel's criminal activities; directed members of state and local law enforcement agencies, such as the Sinaloa State Police, the Investigative Police for the Sinaloa State Attorney General's Office, and the Culiacan Municipal Police, to protect drug loads stored in and transiting through Mexico to the United States; and allowed brutal drug-related violence to be committed by members of the Cartel without consequence. In exchange, the defendants have collectively received millions of dollars in drug money from the Cartel.

As alleged, the defendants have been most closely aligned with the faction of the Cartel run by the sons of Joaquin Archivaldo Guzman Loera, a/k/a "El Chapo," the Cartel's notorious former leader, who are themselves known collectively as the "Chapitos." The defendants have operated at all levels of government and law enforcement in Sinaloa and each abused their positions of trust and authority to help facilitate the Chapitos' operations. For example, ROCHA MOYA was elected Governor of Sinaloa, a position he has held since on or about November 1, 2021, after the Chapitos allegedly helped him get elected by, among other things, kidnapping and intimidating his rivals. In exchange, both before and after he became Governor, ROCHA MOYA allegedly attended meetings with the Chapitos, at which he promised to protect the Chapitos as they distributed massive quantities of drugs to the United States and, as Governor, ROCHA MOYA has allowed the Chapitos to operate with impunity in Sinaloa. Similarly, the other defendants have directly and repeatedly helped the Chapitos in exchange for massive drug-fueled bribes. For example, ZAAVEDRA, who is the Deputy Attorney General for the Sinaloa State Attorney General's Office, has received approximately \$11,000 U.S. dollars each month from the Chapitos and, in exchange, has protected Chapitos members from arrest and informed the Chapitos of planned U.S.-backed law enforcement operations.

Certain of the defendants are also alleged to have themselves directly participated in the Cartel's campaign of violence and retribution. For example, MILLAN, a high-level commander in the Culiacan Municipal Police, allegedly received more than approximately \$1,600 U.S. dollars each month from the Chapitos. In exchange, MILLAN gave the Chapitos unfettered access to the Culiacan Municipal Police and used officers from the police force to help the Chapitos maintain their control over Culiacan, including through arrests, kidnappings, and murder. In or about October 2023, MILLAN allegedly helped the Chapitos kidnap a DEA confidential source and the source's relative, who the Chapitos then had tortured and killed, because the source was suspected of providing information to the Government in connection with this investigation.

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This Indictment is the latest in a series of indictments issued in this District since 2023, charging more than 30 members and associates of the Cartel, including members of the leadership of the Cartel, for their involvement in distributing massive quantities of narcotics into the United States and related crimes, which has resulted in a meaningful disruptive impact on the Cartel's drug trafficking operations.

A chart containing the charges and minimum and maximum penalties each defendant faces is below. All of the defendants are believed to currently reside in Mexico.

The statutory minimum and maximum penalties are prescribed by Congress and provided here for informational purposes only, as any sentencing of the defendants will be determined by a judge.

Mr. Clayton praised the outstanding investigative work of the DEA's Special Operations Division, Bilateral Investigations Unit and the DEA offices in Mexico and Phoenix, as well as the assistance of the Office of International Affairs of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, and the Government of Mexico. Mr. Clayton also thanked the U.S. Attorney's Offices in the Northern District of Illinois and Southern District of California, and the Justice Department's Money Laundering, Narcotics and Forfeiture Section.

Mr. Clayton also thanked the Homeland Security Task Force, a whole-of-government partnership dedicated to eliminating criminal cartels, foreign gangs, transnational criminal organizations, and human smuggling and trafficking rings operating in the United States and abroad.

This prosecution is being handled by the Office's National Security and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jane Y. Chong, Sarah L. Kushner, and David J. Robles are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Defendant	Title	Age	Charges	Minimum and Maximum Penalties
RUBEN ROCHA MOYA	Governor of Sinaloa	76	Narcotics importation conspiracy; Possession of machineguns and destructive devices; Conspiracy to possess machineguns and destructive devices	Life in prison; mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison
ENRIQUE INZUNZA CAZAREZ	Mexican Senator; former Secretary General for Sinaloa	53	Narcotics importation conspiracy; Possession of machineguns and destructive devices; Conspiracy to possess machineguns and destructive devices	Life in prison; mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison
ENRIQUE DIAZ VEGA	Former Secretary of Administration and Finance for Sinaloa	50	Narcotics importation conspiracy;	Life in prison; mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison

Defendant	Title	Age	Charges	Minimum and Maximum Penalties
			<p>Possession of machineguns and destructive devices;</p> <p>Conspiracy to possess machineguns and destructive devices</p>	
DAMASO CASTRO ZAAVEDRA	Deputy Attorney General for the Sinaloa State Attorney General's Office	54	<p>Narcotics importation conspiracy;</p> <p>Possession of machineguns and destructive devices;</p> <p>Conspiracy to possess machineguns and destructive devices</p>	Life in prison; mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison
MARCO ANTONIO ALMANZA AVILES	Former head of the Investigative Police for the Sinaloa State Attorney General's Office	54	<p>Narcotics importation conspiracy;</p> <p>Possession of machineguns and destructive devices;</p>	Life in prison; mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison

Defendant	Title	Age	Charges	Minimum and Maximum Penalties
ALBERTO JORGE CONTRERAS NUNEZ, a/k/a "Cholo"	Former head of the Investigative Police for the Sinaloa State Attorney General's Office	45	Conspiracy to possess machineguns and destructive devices	Life in prison; mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison
GERARDO MERIDA SANCHEZ	Former Secretary of Public Security for Sinaloa	66	<p data-bbox="902 688 1052 804">Narcotics importation conspiracy;</p> <p data-bbox="902 846 1081 1041">Possession of machineguns and destructive devices;</p> <p data-bbox="902 1083 1081 1318">Conspiracy to possess machineguns and destructive devices</p> <p data-bbox="902 1587 1081 1782">Possession of machineguns and destructive devices;</p> <p data-bbox="902 1824 1081 1980">Conspiracy to possess machineguns and</p>	Life in prison; mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison

Defendant	Title	Age	Charges	Minimum and Maximum Penalties
JOSE ANTONIO DIONISIO HIPOLITO, a/k/a "Tornado"	Former Deputy Director of the Sinaloa State Police	55	<p>destructive devices</p> <p>Narcotics importation conspiracy;</p> <p>Possession of machineguns and destructive devices;</p> <p>Conspiracy to possess machineguns and destructive devices</p>	Life in prison; mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison
JUAN DE DIOS GAMEZ MENDIVIL	Mayor of Culiacan	41	<p>Narcotics importation conspiracy;</p> <p>Possession of machineguns and destructive devices;</p> <p>Conspiracy to possess machineguns and destructive devices</p>	Life in prison; mandatory minimum of 40 years in prison

Defendant	Title	Age	Charges	Minimum and Maximum Penalties
JUAN VALENZUELA MILLAN, a/k/a "Juanito"	Former high-level commander in the Culiacan Municipal Police	35	Narcotics importation conspiracy; Possession of machineguns and destructive devices; Conspiracy to possess machineguns and destructive devices; Kidnapping resulting in death; Conspiracy to commit kidnapping resulting in death	Mandatory sentence of life in prison

[1] As the introductory phrase signifies, the entirety of the text of the Indictment and the description of the Indictment set forth herein constitute only allegations, and every fact described should be treated as an allegation.

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Attachments

[u.s. v. ruben rocha moya et al. indictment english version.pdf](#) [PDF, 3 MB]

[u.s. v. ruben rocha moya et al. indictment spanish version.pdf](#) [PDF, 479 KB]

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