



# THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

United States Attorney's Office  
District of Puerto Rico

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## **22 Individuals Charged with Drug Trafficking in the municipalities of Sabana Grande, San Germán, Lajas, and Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico**

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – On March 22, 2023, a federal grand jury in the District of Puerto Rico returned a six-count indictment charging 22 individuals with drug trafficking in the municipalities of Sabana Grande, San Germán, Lajas, and Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Puerto Rico Police Bureau Aguadilla Strike Force are in charge of the investigation, with the collaboration of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS), Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the United States Marshals Service (USMS), the Mayagüez Strike Force, Mayagüez Homicide Division, and the Mayagüez District Attorney. This arrest operation is part of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program.

The indictment alleges that from 2019 to the date of the return of the indictment, the drug trafficking organization distributed heroin, cocaine base (commonly known as “crack”), cocaine, marihuana, Fentanyl, Tramadol, Oxycodone (Percocet), and Alprazolam (Xanax) in Majinas Ward, Las Guaras Ward, Cerro Gordo Ward, José A. Castillo Public Housing Project (PHP) in the municipality of Sabana Grande; Sabana Eneas Ward in the municipality of San Germán; Sabana Yeguas Ward in the municipality of Lajas; Parabueyon Ward in the municipality of Cabo Rojo, and areas nearby for significant financial gain and profit.

“The charges in this case reflect the Justice Department’s commitment to dismantling drug trafficking organizations that sow violence and fear in our communities. We will continue to work closely alongside our law enforcement partners to dismantle criminal organizations throughout Puerto Rico and break the cycle of violence that they perpetuate,” said W. Stephen Muldrow, United States Attorney for the District of Puerto Rico.

“When I first came to San Juan, I said that violent crime would be amongst our top priorities. Today, I want to thank my FBI Aguadilla Team for helping me make good on that promise,” said FBI Special Agent in Charge Joseph González. “There will always be more work to be done, but this takedown dismantled an extremely violent criminal enterprise, which controlled most of the drug trafficking operations in the SW of Puerto Rico, with no regard for human life and no respect for law enforcement. I want to thank the USAO, IRS, USMS, PRPB Mayagüez Strike Force, USPIS, DEA, HSI, CBP and the Mayagüez District Attorney’s Office, for their assistance in this investigation and their continued support to the FBI mission.”

As part of the conspiracy, the members acted in different roles to further the goals of the conspiracy, including acting as leaders, enforcers, runners, sellers, and facilitators. The defendants had access to different vehicles which they used to transport money, narcotics, and firearms. They offered delivery

services to their clients; they would meet up with clients at parking lots or wherever it was convenient to their customers.

The members of the gang used force, violence, and intimidation to maintain control of the areas in which they operated. Twenty-one defendants are also facing a charge of possession of firearms in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. The defendants are:

José Alberto Pagán-Casiano, a/k/a “Pito Cansio”  
Victor Galindo-Padilla, a/k/a “Junito”  
John M. Hernández-Méndez, a/k/a “El Buster”  
Terril Rivera-Calder, a/k/a “TJ”  
Julio Argenis Figueroa-Martínez, a/k/a “Argenis”  
Renty A. Areizaga-García  
Alexander Rivera-Casiano, a/k/a “Papal”  
Gustavo González-González, a/k/a “Gotay/GTA/Negro/Tavo”  
Christian Belén-Silva, a/k/a “Belén”  
Michael Nazario-Rivera, a/k/a “Michael Bolso/El Pri”  
Yomvier Torres-Ruiz  
Jaime Rodríguez-Juliá  
Victor Casiano-Alameda, a/k/a “Junito”  
Rodney A. Santiago-Ramírez  
Gabriel Olmeda-Mercado, a/k/a “Rasta”  
Justin Carlo-Padilla, a/k/a “Donald Trump”  
José M. Rodríguez-Torres, a/k/a “JM”  
Alex Ramírez-Sánchez, a/k/a “Pote”  
Axel Vélez-Denizac, a/k/a “Axel el Enano”  
Shariel Mercado-González  
Yehudy Toro-Vargas  
Francisco Ayala-Vega, a/k/a “Cabra/Sico”

If convicted, the defendants face a minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, and a maximum sentence of life in prison. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Corinne Cordero-Romo from the Gang Section is in charge of the prosecution of the case.

This prosecution is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks.

*An indictment is merely an allegation and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.*

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