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**MULTI-AGENCY COLLABORATION LEADS TO 69 SEARCHES AND OVER 25
ARRESTS IN EFFORT TO FIGHT COORDINATED CRIMINAL ACTIVITY IN
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**

FBI joins with local and state law enforcement to disrupt coordinated criminal activity centered in Woodland, California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Today U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced the arrest of 18 federal defendants on narcotics and weapons-related charges as part of a multi-agency law enforcement investigation into coordinated criminal activity in Woodland, California. The U.S. Attorney was joined in announcing the results of the operation by FBI Special Agent in Charge Sean Ragan, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Secretary Scott Kernan, Woodland Chief of Police Luis Soler, Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig, and Yolo County Sheriff Ed Prieto.

Early this morning, a coalition of local, state and federal law enforcement officers conducted 69 searches pursuant to federal warrants and parole or probation search conditions at various locations throughout Northern California. Officers arrested 18 individuals on charges alleged in six separate federal indictments and one federal criminal complaints that were unsealed today. Three additional, related criminal complaints were filed this week, one in the Eastern District of California, one in the Western District of Pennsylvania, and one in the District of Oregon. In addition, local officials arrested more than 10 additional individuals on state charges as part of the operation. The investigation, led by the FBI, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and the Woodland Police Department, focused on coordinated criminal activity that centered in Yolo County but extended to other Northern California counties and prisons.

Beginning in the spring of 2016, this investigation uncovered organized criminal activity in Woodland, California with ties to criminal organizations located in California's jail and prison

system. Although centered in Yolo County, the investigation revealed that at least 9 other California counties were negatively impacted by these criminal organizations: Sacramento, Sutter, Colusa, Yuba, Del Norte, Solano, Fresno, Santa Clara, and Siskiyou.

The investigation focused on intercepting communications of those involved in drug and firearms offenses – including cellphone communications, social media communications on Facebook and Instagram, and clandestine communications on Snapchat and other platforms. In several instances, these modes of communication were used to sell weapons and coordinate the sales of cocaine, methamphetamine, and prescription drugs. In some instances, it is alleged that prison inmates directed defendants outside the prisons to smuggle drugs into the prison or to sell and distribute narcotics outside the prison.

U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott stated, “Today’s operation is the result of a months-long endeavor involving federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies to disrupt coordinated criminal activity that, although centered in Yolo County, spread to several other Northern California counties. This operation demonstrates how federal law enforcement can join forces with our state and local partners to make our communities safer and stop illegal guns and drugs from flooding our streets.”

“The FBI is committed to joining forces with our state and local partners to effectively combat the gang and drug-related violence that plagues our communities,” said Special Agent in Charge Sean Ragan of the FBI Sacramento Field Office. “Our shared goal is stopping gang violence, getting drugs and weapons off the streets, and helping to bring justice to the victims of crimes committed in our communities. Today’s arrests demonstrate the strength of successful law enforcement collaboration and highlight our shared commitment to the public we serve.”

“Our department is committed to putting a stop to illegal activities conducted by prison gangs in our neighborhoods, schools and communities to further their criminal organizations and instill fear in people,” said Secretary Scott Kernan, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. “The success of this investigation demonstrates how effective our partnerships are with local, state, and federal agencies. When we work together, we effectively are able to target dangerous individuals in and out of prison. I am thankful and proud of the hard work that went into this operation.”

“Over the last several years, many of the defendants who were arrested today and their associates have plagued Yolo County with their criminal activity. This operation has helped to disable their organization at its most basic level and will hopefully have positive long term impacts on public safety,” said Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig.

Operation Silent Night is the product of an investigation by the FBI, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), Yolo County District Attorney, Woodland Police Department, and the California Highway Patrol. The following agencies provided substantial assistance: Colusa County Sheriff's Office, Sacramento Police Department, Sacramento County Sheriff's Office, West Sacramento Police Department, Yolo County Sheriff's Office, Davis Police Department, Yuba City Police Department, Yuba County Sheriff's Office, Sutter County Sheriff's Office, Solano County Sheriff's Office, Vacaville Police Department, the Correctional Intelligence Task Force (CITF), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Assistant U.S. Attorneys Owen Roth and Justin L. Lee are prosecuting the cases.

The federal defendants and their charges are listed below. The charges are only allegations; the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

- Aldo Arellano, 24, of Marysville, is charged with distribution of methamphetamine.
- Raul Barajas, 21, of Woodland, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute controlled substances, and possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.
- Patrick Botello, 31, of Pelican Bay State Prison, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute methamphetamine and heroin and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Israel Covarrubias, 25, of Woodland, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute controlled substances after having been convicted of a felony drug offense, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, distribution of methamphetamine, and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Milton Escobedo, 28, of Woodland, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute controlled substances, distribution of cocaine, and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Rachel Felix, 38, of Woodland, is charged with distribution of methamphetamine.
- Ashley Habash, 28, of Marysville, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute methamphetamine and heroin and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Edgar Jimenez, 19, of Sacramento, is charged with distribution of cocaine and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Justin Johnson, 33, of Sacramento, is charged with possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine and being a felon in possession of a firearm.
- Jose Madrigal-Vega, 31, Woodland, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute controlled substances, and distribution of methamphetamine.
- Victor Magana, 24, of Woodland, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to

distribute and to distribute controlled substances, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, distribution of methamphetamine, distribution of cocaine, and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.

- James Masterson, 28, of Newcastle, is charged with using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Brenda Miranda, 21, of Napa, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute methamphetamine and heroin and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Reginald Pajimola, 23, of Marysville, is charged with possession with intent to distribute cocaine and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Mercedes Silva-Sims, 21, of Colusa, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute methamphetamine and heroin and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Joshua Sims, 24, of Colusa, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute methamphetamine and heroin, attempted distribution of methamphetamine, using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense, and distribution of cocaine.
- Erica Umbay, 42, of Woodland, is charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm.
- Ricardo Villa, 39, of Pelican Bay State Prison, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute methamphetamine and heroin, and using a cellphone to facilitate a drug trafficking offense.
- Trevor White, 27, of Sacramento, is charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and to distribute controlled substances and distribution of methamphetamine.

Two additional defendants are being charged in the District of Oregon and the Western District of Pennsylvania. The Yolo County District Attorney's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office continue to review possible charges against additional potential defendants.

This case is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF). The OCDETF program was established in 1982 to conduct comprehensive, multilevel attacks on major drug trafficking and money laundering organizations. The principal mission of the OCDETF program is to identify, disrupt, and dismantle the most serious drug trafficking and money laundering organizations and those primarily responsible for the nation's drug supply.

This case is brought as part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), an initiative that brings together federal, state and local law enforcement to combat gun and gang crime. At the core of PSN is increased federal prosecution to incapacitate chronic violent offenders as well as to communicate a credible deterrent threat to potential gun offenders.

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