



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, July 15, 2020

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MS-13 GANG MEMBERS INDICTED FOR SIX MURDERS ON LONG ISLAND

Eight Defendants, including Leaders of the Hollywood and Sailors Cliques of MS-13, Charged with Racketeering Offenses including Murders, Attempted Murders, Assaults, Kidnapping Conspiracy and Narcotics Trafficking

A 24-count indictment was unsealed yesterday in federal court in Central Islip charging eight members of the violent transnational criminal organization La Mara Salvatrucha, also known as the “MS-13,” with multiple racketeering offenses in connection with six murders, two attempted murders, a kidnapping conspiracy and narcotics trafficking conspiracies, as well as related charges including assault in aid of racketeering and firearms offenses. The defendants Carlos Alfaro, Jose Moises Blanco, Oseas Gonzalez, Jose Jonathan Guevara-Castro, Victor Lopez-Morales, Ever Morales-Lopez, David Sosa-Guevara and Kevin Torres allegedly are members of one of two subgroups or “cliques” of the MS-13 operating on Long Island: the Hollywood Locos Salvatruchas (“Hollywood”) clique and the Sailors Locos Salvatruchas Westside (“Sailors”) clique. Sosa-Guevara and Torres allegedly were the New York leaders of the Hollywood and Sailors cliques, respectively, and were in direct communication with high-ranking MS-13 leaders in El Salvador.

Blanco and Gonzalez were arrested yesterday morning in Salisbury and Charlotte, North Carolina, respectively, appeared in the United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina and were both detained. Blanco and Gonzalez will be transferred to the Eastern District of New York and arraigned at a later date before United States Circuit Judge Joseph F. Bianco. Alfaro, Lopez-Morales, Morales-Lopez and Sosa-Guevara, who are in state custody, and Torres, who is in federal custody, will also be arraigned at a later date before Circuit Judge Bianco. Guevara-Castro remains at large.

Two additional MS-13 members, both of whom were juveniles at the time they allegedly committed the crimes, have separately been charged with racketeering offenses and several murders. By statute, those cases remains under seal at this time.

Attorney General William P. Barr; Seth D. DuCharme, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York; William F. Sweeney, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI); Ray Donovan, Special Agent-in-Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, New York Division (DEA); Madeline Singas, District Attorney, Nassau County District Attorney's Office (NCDAO); and Patrick J. Ryder, Commissioner, Nassau County Police Department (NCPD), announced the arrests and indictment.

“In 2017, the President directed the Department of Justice to go to war against MS-13, and we did just that,” said Attorney General Barr. “In coordination with our partners at the Department of Homeland Security, the Justice Department’s law enforcement components have successfully investigated, charged, and arrested command and control elements of MS-13 responsible for murder. Joint Task Force Vulcan’s operations have significantly degraded MS-13’s capabilities. While there is still work to be done, the Department of Justice remains committed to protecting Americans threatened by MS-13, and we will not rest until we have successfully defeated this transnational criminal organization.”

“As alleged, the defendants committed multiple murders and other violent and wanton crimes on Long Island to further MS-13’s vicious code,” stated Acting United States Attorney DuCharme. “Victims were hacked with machetes, one shot numerous times and another decapitated. This Office, working tirelessly with our local and federal law enforcement partners, will not rest until violent gangs are eradicated from the communities they have terrorized.” Mr. DuCharme expressed his grateful appreciation to all the members of the FBI’s Long Island Gang Task Force, the DEA, the NCPD and the NCDAO, as well as to the members of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Suffolk County Police Department (SCPD), the FBI’s Charlotte Safe Streets Task Force, and the United States Attorneys’ Offices for the Western District of North Carolina, the Middle District of North Carolina, and the Eastern District of Virginia, for their outstanding assistance and partnership in this case.

"Putting these men in a federal prison for the rest of their lives, or facing possible death sentences, may not mean much to them as members of MS-13 because it fits their macho bravado," stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Sweeney. "But it means a tremendous amount of relief to the communities on Long Island they've terrorized by using machetes to murder teenagers. Our work over the last few years on the FBI Long Island Gang Task Force illustrates how vitally important it is to partner with those communities, gain their trust, and doggedly investigate these deplorable crimes. We've seen a vast improvement, but I want the community to know we're not going anywhere, our work is not done. If we can keep the lines of communication open, we can stop the violence before it turns deadly. Reach out and know we're here to help."

“This investigation outlines the strategy used to kidnap, assault and murder six individuals by alleged members of MS-13. Each act is distinctive, but all are clear examples of the charged extreme violence and savagery of the defendants. I

commend our law enforcement partners for their diligent and meaningful work,” stated DEA Special Agent-in-Charge Donovan.

“This indictment strikes yet another heavy blow to MS-13 and will further dismantle the brutal gang that terrorized so many communities,” stated District Attorney Singas. “Thanks to the relentless and collaborative efforts of law enforcement at the federal, state, and local levels MS-13 is on the run, gang violence is down, and our communities are safer. I commend the US Attorney’s Office, the FBI, DEA and NCPD for their outstanding work bringing this case.”

“This indictment is another step forward in eradicating the vicious MS-13 gangs from our communities which ultimately ensures the safety of our neighborhoods and residents. The six victims of gruesome murders are a stark reminder that we must continue our enforcement of all illegal gangs and never stop pursuing justice. I congratulate all of the investigators and their respective agencies for their hard work and dedication, who continue to work together to bring an end to this violence,” stated NCPD Commissioner Ryder.

As detailed in the indictment and in the government’s detention letter, in 2016 and 2017 the Sailors and Hollywood cliques of the MS-13 gang, both of whom had a significant presence in the Roosevelt and Freeport areas of Nassau County, collaborated in the criminal activities on behalf of the MS-13, including the murders of suspected rival gang members.

Murder of Oscar Acosta

Torres is charged in connection with his leadership role in the murder of 19-year-old Oscar Acosta, who was suspected of associating himself with the MS-13’s principal rival on Long Island, the 18th Street gang. Torres allegedly ordered a “greenlight,” or authorization, to kill Acosta and assigned specific roles for other Sailors to the plan and carry out the murder. On April 29, 2016, those MS-13 members lured Acosta to a wooded area near an elementary school in Brentwood. Once there, they brutally beat Acosta with tree limbs, knocking him unconscious. They then bound Acosta’s hands and feet, and coordinating with the local Sailors clique leader in Brentwood, moved Acosta to a more secluded area near an abandoned psychiatric hospital. They carried him into the woods behind a warehouse and stabbed and slashed him to death with a machete. The MS-13 members then buried Acosta’s body in a shallow grave, which was discovered in September 2016.

Murder of Kerin Pineda

The indictment charges Gonzalez, Guevara-Castro, Lopez-Morales, Morales-Lopez, Sosa-Guevara and Torres with the murder of 20-year-old Kerin Pineda, who was believed to be a member of the rival 18th Street gang. Torres allegedly ordered the “greenlight” for Pineda, marking him for death. Members of the Sailors clique coordinated with members of the Hollywood clique and devised the plan. On May 21, 2016, MS-13 members, armed with machetes, lured Pineda to a secluded wooded area

near the Merrick-Freeport border. Torres, Lopez-Morales and Sosa-Guevara allegedly acted as lookouts for police and stayed in contact with the MS-13 members in the woods while they waited for Pineda. When Pineda arrived, he was surrounded and violently attacked by the MS-13 members, including both charged juveniles, who each took turns hacking and slashing him with their machetes. Pineda's corpse was buried in a hole that had been dug the day before. Before leaving the scene, the MS-13 members contacted the lookouts who advised them that they could safely leave.

Murder of Josue Amaya-Leonor

Hollywood clique members Alfaro, Blanco, Gonzalez and Lopez-Morales are charged in connection with their roles in the murder of 19-year-old Josue Amaya-Leonor on September 4, 2016 because of his perceived association with the 18th Street gang. Amaya-Leonor was lured to a secluded wooded area deep into the Roosevelt Preserve to smoke marijuana. Once there, he was allegedly surrounded by the machete-wielding MS-13 members – including one of the charged juveniles – struck repeatedly and killed. The MS-13 members dug a hole and buried Amaya-Leonor's body, which was not found until May 2018.

Murder of Javier Castillo

Torres is charged for his role in authorizing the murder of 15-year-old Javier Castillo on October 10, 2016 for his perceived association with the 18th Street gang. Members of the Sailors clique in Brentwood convinced Castillo, who lived in Central Islip, to go with them to Cow Meadow Park, a secluded area in Freeport, to smoke marijuana. Once there, the MS-13 members, including one of the charged juveniles, allegedly attacked and killed Castillo, each taking turns hacking him with a machete. Torres also served as the lookout for police in the area during the murder. The MS-13 members dug a hole and buried Castillo's body, which was not discovered until October 2017.

Murder of Carlos Ventura-Zelaya

Alfaro is charged with the October 14, 2016 murder of 24-year-old Carlos Ventura-Zelaya in Roosevelt. Ventura-Zelaya had been marked for death by the MS-13 because of his suspected membership in the rival 18th Street gang. On the night of the murder, Alfaro and other MS-13 members spotted Ventura-Zelaya on the street in Roosevelt. Alfaro, armed with a 9mm handgun, got out of the car, approached Ventura-Zelaya, and allegedly fired all nine rounds from the gun, striking and killing Ventura-Zelaya.

Murder of Angel Soler

The racketeering charges against Hollywood clique members Lopez-Morales and Sosa-Guevara include the July 21, 2017 murder of 15-year-old Angel Soler and an August 2017 conspiracy to kidnap a victim identified in the indictment as John Doe #3. Soler was a suspected 18th Street gang member, and Sosa-Guevara allegedly

ordered his murder. Lopez-Morales and other MS-13 members allegedly carried out the murder, luring Soler to wooded lot near Milburn Creek in Roosevelt to smoke marijuana. The group attacked Soler with machetes and a pickaxe, and buried his body in a shallow grave. The following day, MS-13 members went back to lay cement over Soler's body to better conceal it.

Kidnapping Conspiracy

Just weeks after the Soler murder, Lopez-Morales and Sosa-Guevara allegedly planned the kidnapping, assault, and/or murder of John Doe #3, an MS-13 member who had violated the rules of the gang. Specifically, Sosa-Guevara instructed Lopez-Morales and two other MS-13 members to kidnap John Doe #3 and wait for further guidance from MS-13 leadership to kill or brutally assault him. On August 6, 2017, Lopez-Morales and the other gang members' plan to kidnap John Doe #3 was foiled by law enforcement, who had been intercepting the calls arranging the attack, and Lopez-Morales was taken into custody.

Attack on Suspected Rivals

The indictment charges Hollywood clique members Alfaro and Gonzalez with attacking a group of males who had gathered in front of a house in Brentwood on July 18, 2016. That night, the MS-13 members allegedly agreed to drive around the area "hunting" for rival gang members to kill. Four of the gang members, including Alfaro, were selected to participate, armed with two handguns and a machete. While driving around Brentwood that night, the MS-13 members spotted a group of males whom they believed were members of the rival Bloods street gang. Alfaro and two other MS-13 members concealed their faces with bandanas, ran over to the group and attacked them. One victim, identified in the indictment as John Doe #1, was shot in the leg. Another victim, identified in the indictment as John Doe #2, was shot and slashed in the head, face and arms. John Doe #2 sustained disfiguring injuries, but survived the attack.

Cocaine and Marijuana Distribution

The indictment charges various members of the Sailors clique with conspiring to distribute cocaine and marijuana, and members of the Hollywood clique with conspiring to distribute marijuana, stemming from the MS-13 cliques' alleged street-level sales of cocaine and marijuana on Long Island, the proceeds of which were used to help finance the MS-13's criminal operations.

Additionally, during the execution of court-authorized search and seizure warrants at the North Carolina residences of both Blanco and Gonzalez yesterday, law enforcement agents and officers recovered additional evidence, including machetes, firearms, ammunition, narcotics, and MS-13 related paraphernalia.

The charges in the indictment are allegations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, each defendant faces up to life in prison, and is eligible for the death penalty.

In August 2019, Attorney General Barr created Joint Task Force Vulcan to carry out the recommendations of the MS-13 subcommittee formed under the Attorney General's Transnational Organized Crime Task Force, which was the result of President Trump's February 2017 Executive Order directing the Departments of Justice, State, and Homeland Security, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence to coordinate a whole-of-government approach to dismantle transnational criminal organizations, such as MS-13, and restore safety for the American people. The principle purpose of JTFV is to coordinate and lead the efforts of the Justice Department and U.S. law enforcement agencies against MS-13 in order to dismantle the group.

This indictment is the latest in a series of federal prosecutions by the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York targeting members of the MS-13, a violent transnational criminal organization. The MS-13's leadership is based in El Salvador and Honduras, but the gang has thousands of members across the United States, comprised primarily of immigrants from Central America. With numerous branches, or "cliques," the MS-13 is the largest and most violent street gang on Long Island. Since 2003, hundreds of MS-13 members, including dozens of clique leaders, have been convicted on federal felony charges in the Eastern District of New York. A majority of those MS-13 members have been convicted on federal racketeering charges for participating in murders, attempted murders and assaults. Since 2010, this Office has obtained indictments charging MS-13 members with carrying out more than 55 murders in the Eastern District of New York, and has convicted dozens of MS-13 leaders and members in connection with those murders. These prosecutions are the product of investigations led by the FBI's Long Island Gang Task Force, comprising agents and officers of the FBI, the NCPD, the SCPD, the Nassau County Sheriff's Department, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, the Suffolk County Probation Office, the New York State Police, the Hempstead Police Department, the Rockville Centre Police Department and the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's Long Island Criminal Division. Assistant United States Attorneys Paul G. Scotti, Justina L. Geraci and Megan E. Farrell are in charge of the prosecution, with assistance from Assistant District Attorney Jared Rosenblatt of the Nassau County District Attorney's Office.

The Defendants:

CARLOS ALFARO ("Russo")

Age: 23

Roosevelt, New York

JOSE MOISES BLANCO ("Cuervo")

Age: 30

Salisbury, North Carolina

OSEAS GONZALEZ ("Manota" and "Cordero")

Age: 28

Charlotte, North Carolina

JOSE JONATHAN GUEVARA-CASTRO (“Suspechoso”)

Age: 25

formerly of Roosevelt, New York, and Annapolis, Maryland

VICTOR LOPEZ-MORALES (“Persa”)

Age: 32

Roosevelt, New York

EVER MORALES-LOPEZ (“Kyen,” “Inke,” and “White Boy”)

Age: 26

Freeport, New York

DAVID SOSA-GUEVARA (“Risky”)

Age: 28

Roosevelt, New York

KEVIN TORRES (“Quieto” and “Inquieto”)

Age: 24

Freeport, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 20-CR-251 (JFB)