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Contact: Public Affairs Officer  
Phone: (503) 727-1000  
[USAOR.PublicAffairs@usdoj.gov](mailto:USAOR.PublicAffairs@usdoj.gov)

**Money Launderer for Mexican Drug Trafficking Organization Sentenced to Federal Prison**

PORLAND, Ore.—A Mexican National who jointly operated Tienda Mexicana González Bros., a small convenience store and market in Southeast Portland, was sentenced to federal prison today for using the business and its money transmission licenses to launder millions of dollars in drug proceeds on behalf of a Mexico-based drug trafficking organization operating in the Portland Metropolitan Area.

Jesus González Vazquez, 37, of Jalisco, Mexico, was sentenced to 132 months in federal prison and three years' supervised release.

"Money launderers who help drug trafficking organizations transfer their illegal proceeds are equally culpable for the path of destruction caused by illegal drugs. While drug trafficking organizations can quickly replace low-level couriers and dealers when they are arrested by law enforcement, it's much harder for these organizations to quickly replace savvy, large volume money launderers like Mr. González Vazquez and his brother Mr. Romo. Mr. González Vazquez's prosecution and lengthy prison sentence will challenge this organization's ability to profit from their crimes and sends a strong message that money laundering is a serious crime with significant consequences," said Scott Erik Asphaug, Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

"Drug cartels thrive on their lust for money and power," said Special Agent in Charge Robert Hammer, who oversees HSI operations in the Pacific Northwest. "Operating under the guise of a small convenience store, Vazquez funneled millions of drug profits back to Mexico. This sentence is a successful step towards removing the ability of the cartels to collect their profits from the poison they inject into our communities."

"This case highlights the importance of teaming with our federal and local partners in order to address these and other related large-scale issues," said Interim Chief Claudio Grandjean of the Gresham Police Department. "The opioid crisis is ravaging so many in our communities across the region and across the country. I'm proud of the part the Gresham Police Department was able to play in holding those accountable who seek to profit from others' misery."

According to court documents, beginning in 2018, two men, Samuel Diaz and Faustino Monroy, organized, led, and ran a drug trafficking organization, based in Mexico, responsible for trafficking hundreds of pounds of methamphetamine and heroin into Oregon for distribution. Diaz and Monroy worked closely with two associates, Edgar Omar Quiroz and Gerson Fernando

Martinez-Cruz, who ran a Portland distribution cell. At its peak, Quiroz and Martinez-Cruz's cell was responsible for distributing as much as 77 pounds of methamphetamine and 55 pounds of heroin weekly in and around Portland.

The organization's numerous sources of supply would import large quantities of illegal drugs that were taken to stash houses throughout the metro area where they were processed and prepared for sale. A large network of local drug dealers would then distribute user quantities of each drug. The organization would routinely change stash locations, rotate vehicles and phones, and pay individual couriers to take time off to avoid detection by law enforcement.

In approximately 2011, González Vazquez moved to Oregon and began working with his co-defendant and brother, Juan Antonio Romo, 46, also of Jalisco, at the González Bros. market. During this time, the market was an authorized agent for Sigue Corporation; Servicio UniTeller, Inc.; and Continental Exchange Solutions/Ria Financial, three large money services businesses known primarily for international money wires. Between January 2015 and October 2019, the majority of money transfers initiated at the market were conducted by González Vazquez and Romo.

On a continuing basis, González Vazquez and Romo would receive the proceeds of the Diaz-Monroy organization's illegal drug sales in the form of bulk cash delivered by couriers to the González Bros. market. González Vazquez and Romo would wire the money to various DTO contacts throughout Mexico, structuring the transfers into multiple smaller transactions to avoid detection by the money services businesses or financial regulators. According to the government's evidence, between January 2015 and October 2019, González Vazquez and Romo laundered at least \$19 million dollars in drug proceeds from the market.

In addition to laundering the DTO's proceeds, González Vazquez also performed other illegal functions for the organization, including facilitating the purchase of weapons in the U.S. to smuggle to Mexico, facilitating large drug transactions, assisting the escape of a fugitive to Mexico, assisting various drug dealers obtain false driver's licenses, and helping DTO associates illegally enter the U.S.

In October 2019, González Vazquez and many of his co-defendants [were arrested](#) as part of a coordinated, multi-agency law enforcement operation. Investigators executed federal search warrants at more than a dozen locations throughout the Portland area, seizing 22 pounds of methamphetamine, quantities of heroin and cocaine, and seven firearms. González Vazquez and his co-defendants arrested as part of the takedown joined several others already in state custody on related charges. In total, law enforcement seized 51 firearms, including assault rifles, shotguns, and handguns, from defendants affiliated with the Diaz-Monroy drug trafficking organization.

On October 24, 2019, a federal grand jury in Portland returned a 61-count superseding indictment charging González Vazquez and 41 others for their roles in the drug trafficking and money laundering conspiracy.

On March 24, 2021, González Vazquez pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit money laundering.

During his sentencing, U.S. District Court Judge Michael H. Simon ordered González Vazquez to forfeit all assets seized by law enforcement during the investigation, including body armor,

firearms, magazines, several dozen cell phones, and more than \$250,000 in criminally-derived proceeds seized by law enforcement.

González Vazquez is the twentieth defendant sentenced for his role in the conspiracy. Defendants have been sentenced to as much as 235 months in prison. 24 defendants are awaiting sentencing and one is pending trial. Diaz, Monroy, and several other defendants are fugitives believed to be in Mexico.

Acting U.S. Attorney Asphaug, Special Agent in Charge Hammer, and Interim Chief Grandjean made the announcement.

This case was investigated by HSI Portland and the Gresham Police Department with assistance from the FBI; U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration; Oregon State Police; Portland Police Bureau; and the Multnomah, Clackamas, and Clark County Sheriff's Offices. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon prosecuted the case.

This case was brought as part of the Justice Department's Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program, the centerpiece of the department's strategy for reducing the availability of drugs in the U.S. OCDETF was established in 1982 to mount a comprehensive attack on drug trafficking by disrupting and dismantling major drug trafficking and money laundering organizations. Today, OCDETF combines the resources and expertise of its member federal agencies in coordination with state and local law enforcement.

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