



THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT *of* JUSTICE

United States Attorney's Office
District of Oregon

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 28, 2021
USAO-OR.gov | [@USAO_OR](https://twitter.com/USAO_OR)

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

California Man Pleads Guilty for Role in Eastern Oregon Methamphetamine Trafficking Conspiracy

PORTLAND, Ore.—A Vacaville, California man pleaded guilty today for his role in a conspiracy to traffic large quantities of methamphetamine from California for distribution in Northeast Oregon and Southeast Washington.

Noel Lomas Murillo, 33, pleaded guilty to conspiring to possess with intent to distribute and distribute methamphetamine.

According to court documents, in November 2017, the Blue Mountain Enforcement Narcotics Team (BENT), Oregon State Police (OSP), and the FBI began investigating a drug trafficking organization led by Murillo's brother, Abel Lomas Murillo, 28, of Weston, Oregon.

The investigation revealed that as early as July 2017, Noel Murillo transported drugs from Vacaville to Klamath Falls, Oregon where a courier would deliver them to his brother. Abel Murillo also made multiple trips to Medford, Oregon to pick up drugs and transport them to Morrow and Umatilla Counties for distribution.

In January 2018, an OSP trooper stopped one of the Murillo brothers' couriers, Luis Alberto Navarro, 33, of Boardman, Oregon, in a vehicle traveling near Klamath Falls en route to Umatilla County. A search of the vehicle revealed 11 concealed packages containing more than eight kilograms of methamphetamine.

In early May 2018, as the investigation continued, Abel Murillo enlisted another courier, Noel Ponce Villegas, 28, also of Boardman, to drive methamphetamine from Medford to Boardman. Investigators surveilled Abel Murillo as he traveled from Umatilla County to a storage locker in Medford and loaded a trailer pulled by his truck. Abel Murillo paid Villegas to drive his truck and trailer while he followed him to minimize his own risk. In the early morning hours of May 6, 2018, investigators from BENT, OSP and FBI stopped Abel Murillo and Villegas as they drove near mile marker 102 on Interstate 84.

Investigators seized 42 packages of methamphetamine, 36 of which were concealed in the false bottom of a propane tank. The packages contained approximately 17.6 kilograms of methamphetamine. Later the same day, investigators executed a search warrant at Abel Murillo's residence, seizing 29 firearms and body armor. Pursuant to a separate search warrant, another 10 pounds of methamphetamine and five firearms were found in a Medford storage locker Abel Murillo had visited earlier in the weekend.

On December 19, 2019, a federal grand jury in Portland returned a two-count superseding indictment charging Noel Murillo with conspiring to possess with intent to distribute and distribute methamphetamine and possessing with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

Noel Murillo will be sentenced on January 5, 2022 before U.S. District Court Judge Michael H. Simon.

On May 7, 2018, Navarro pleaded guilty to possessing with intent to distribute methamphetamine. He will be sentenced on February 1, 2022.

On April 15, 2019, Abel Murillo pleaded guilty to conspiring to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine. On September 10, 2019, he was [sentenced](#) to 235 months in federal prison and five years' supervised release.

On April 18, 2019, Villegas pleaded guilty to possessing with intent to distribute methamphetamine. On December 16, 2020, he was sentenced to time served and three years' supervised release.

Acting U.S. Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug of the District of Oregon made the announcement.

This case was investigated by BENT, OSP, and the FBI. It is being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon.

###