



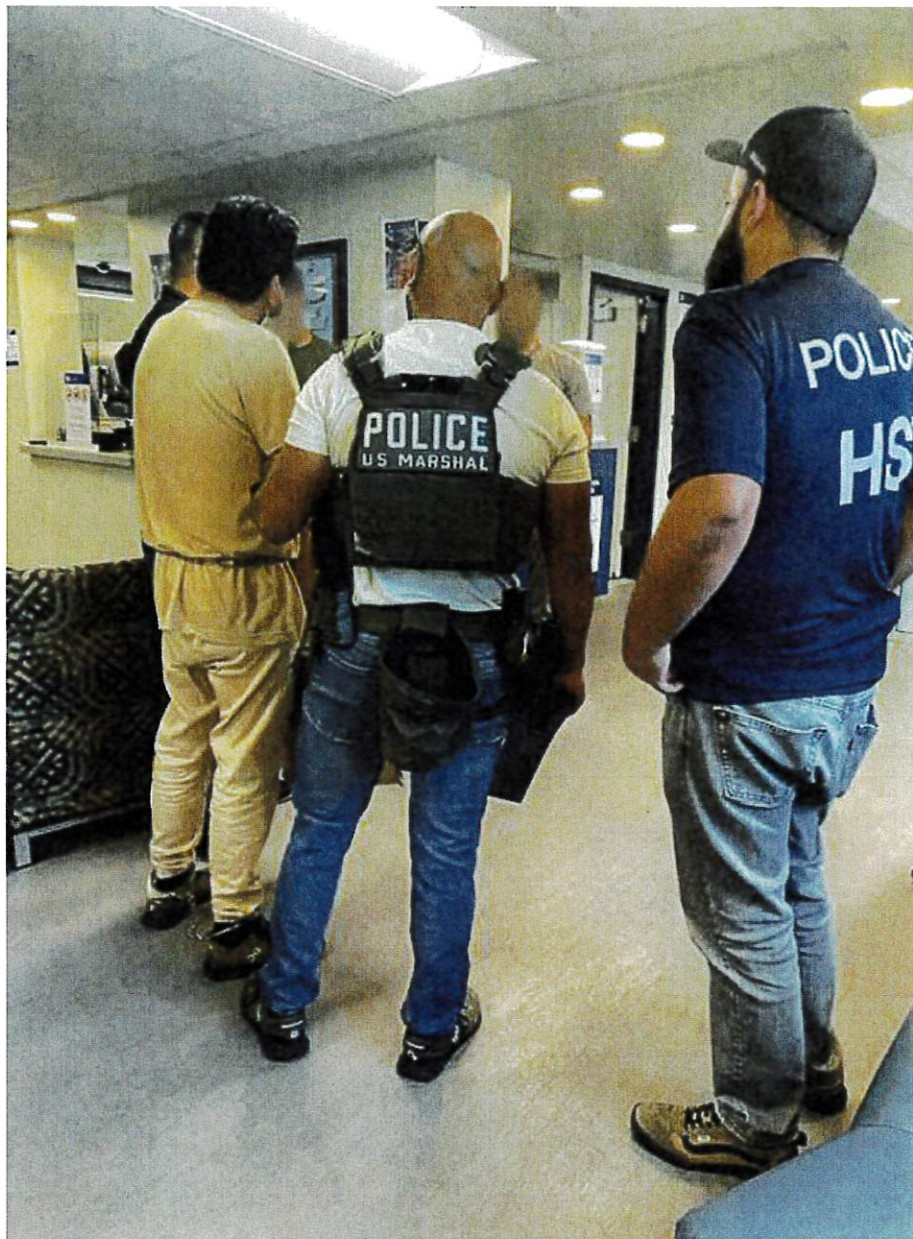
J.S. Department of Homeland Security

Lead Defendant in Long Running Drug Trafficking Conspiracy Extradited to the US From Mexico Following HSI Sells, Multiagency Case

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Mexican government significantly assisted in the extradition process

SELLS, Ariz. — A Mexican national was extradited July 12 from Mexico to the United States to face charges related to drug trafficking, demonstrating the ongoing cooperation between the United States and Mexico to combat the influx of dangerous drugs, including fentanyl, into the United States.



Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the DEA and the FBI conducted the investigation in this case with substantial assistance from the Tohono O'odham Nation Police Department.

"The rightful surrender to Mexican authorities by this defendant marks a significant step in this multiyear drug investigation," said HSI Arizona Special Agent in Charge Francisco B. Burrola. "This extradition was made possible due to multiple law enforcement agencies, to include HSI, who came together to ensure this man was handed over to U.S. authorities as per signed upon agreements."

Rodrigo Paez-Quintero made his initial court appearance July 16 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona in Tucson.

"Our fight against international drug traffickers who spread poison into our communities requires all hands on deck," said Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco. "This extradition is yet another example of our partnership with Mexican law enforcement to dismantle deadly cartels and bring drug kingpins to justice."

"This indictment alleges coordinated conduct to traffic fentanyl and other illicit drugs into Phoenix," said U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona Gary Restaino. "Many thanks to our federal, foreign and sovereign tribal partners for their teamwork and dedication."

Paez-Quintero is charged in an indictment with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute heroin, methamphetamine and fentanyl and multiple counts of possession with intent to distribute heroin, methamphetamine and fentanyl. Each count carries a maximum sentence of life in prison and a maximum fine of \$10 million. In the year prior to March 2019, the indictment alleges defendant's involvement in at least nine drug trafficking events from the Lukeville Port of Entry, through Ajo and up to Phoenix. According to numerous open sources, Paez-Quintero is the nephew of jailed Mexican drug kingpin Rafael Caro-Quintero, whom HSI previously investigated.

An indictment is simply a method by which a person is charged with criminal activity and raises no inference of guilt. An individual is presumed innocent until evidence is presented to a jury that establishes guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

This effort was supported by the [Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces \(https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF\)](https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF) (OCDETF) and the [Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas \(https://www.dhs.gov/now-leaving?external_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.azhida.org&back_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dhs.gov%2Fhsi%2Fnews%2F2024%2F07%2F18%2Flead-defendant-long-running-drug-trafficking-conspiracy-extradited-us-mexico\)](https://www.dhs.gov/now-leaving?external_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.azhida.org&back_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.dhs.gov%2Fhsi%2Fnews%2F2024%2F07%2F18%2Flead-defendant-long-running-drug-trafficking-conspiracy-extradited-us-mexico) (HIDTA) task force. OCDETF identifies, disrupts and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multiagency approach. The HIDTA program was created by Congress to assist critical drug trafficking regions of the United States. The Arizona HIDTA program supports law enforcement agencies who work to reduce drug production and trafficking throughout the state.

HSI would like to thank the U.S. Marshals Service for its assistance with the extradition efforts as well as the Justice Department's Office of International Affairs, which worked with law enforcement partners in Mexico to secure the arrest and extradition of Paez-Quintero.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona in Tucson is handling the prosecution.

Topics

[LAW ENFORCEMENT \(/TOPICS/LAW-ENFORCEMENT\)](#)

Keywords

[HOMELAND SECURITY INVESTIGATIONS \(HSI\) \(/KEYWORDS/HOMELAND-SECURITY-INVESTIGATIONS-HSI\)](#)

[ILLICIT DRUG \(/KEYWORDS/ILLICIT-DRUG\)](#)

[LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERSHIP \(/KEYWORDS/LAW-ENFORCEMENT-PARTNERSHIP\)](#)

About HSI

HSI is the principal investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), responsible for investigating transnational crime and threats, specifically those criminal organizations that exploit the global infrastructure through which international trade, travel and finance move. HSI's workforce consists of over 10,000 employees, assigned to 235 offices within the United States and 93 overseas locations in 56 countries. HSI's international presence represents DHS's largest investigative law enforcement presence abroad and one of the largest international footprints in U.S. law enforcement.

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