

Feb 11, 2026

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Phone (850) 245-0150



OFFICE OF THE
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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Convictions, Final Arrest in Operation 13 Tiers



Courtesy of the Office of the Attorney General

FORT MYERS, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced the conviction of illegal alien Franklin Guillen Lara, a member of Sureños or SUR-13, which is tied to the California-based prison gang, the Mexican Mafia. Lara was convicted by a Hendry County jury last week for trafficking fentanyl, trafficking methamphetamine, conspiracy to traffic fentanyl, and conspiracy to traffic methamphetamine, and faces 120 years in the Florida Department of Corrections.

“The conviction we announced today has a criminal alien facing between 25 and 120 years in prison for his involvement in a gang that pushed fentanyl into Florida communities,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier.** “Thanks to the coordination between federal, state, and local law enforcement, another dangerous gang member is off the streets and behind bars with the other 24 defendants in this case.”

“Bringing all 25 members of this criminal network to justice took years of relentless investigative work and unwavering partnership,” **said FDLE Special Agent in Charge Eli Lawson.** “FDLE is proud to stand with the Office of Statewide Prosecution in ensuring that every individual responsible for flooding our communities with deadly fentanyl is held accountable. We are grateful for Governor DeSantis’ leadership in providing law enforcement with the tools and support of the SAFE program, which strengthens our ability to protect Florida communities from this poison.”

“This case demonstrates the commitment of Homeland Security Investigations to collaborate with our local, state, and federal law enforcement partners to dismantle violent criminal organizations that threaten the safety of our communities,” **said John Yancey, HSI Resident Agent in Charge in Ft. Myers.** “HSI Tampa will continue to pursue those who traffic dangerous drugs and engage in gang activity, regardless of where they operate. Our message is clear: we will not tolerate criminal enterprises that endanger lives in Florida.”

The case stems back to a 2022 investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Hendry County Sheriff’s Office, and Office of Statewide Prosecution. The operation, 13 Tiers, focused on members of the SUR-13 gang who were operating a drug trafficking organization from behind bars.

The investigation revealed incarcerated leaders of SUR-13 operated a drug trafficking operation within Florida prisons. At times, working with fellow gangs MS-13 and the Latin Kings, the criminal organization’s ruling body—called the Mesa—authorized member requests to execute other inmates and continue the distribution of drugs sourced from Mexico and California. Using contraband cellphones, members of SUR-13 would contact each other from different prisons throughout the state, including Brevard, Charlotte, Holmes, and Miami-Dade counties. Gang members also kept contact with area drug dealers outside the prisons to facilitate drug shipments and deliveries.

Authorities seized more than 50 pounds of fentanyl, 380 pounds of methamphetamines, approximately five pounds of cocaine, approximately one pound of oxycodone, one pound of black tar heroin, and a half pound of morphine.

Twenty-five defendants were charged with 64 total felony counts, including: racketeering; trafficking in amphetamine; trafficking in fentanyl; trafficking in cocaine; trafficking in oxycodone; trafficking in illegal drugs, to wit: morphine; conspiracy to commit racketeering; conspiracy to traffic in amphetamine; conspiracy to traffic in fentanyl; conspiracy to traffic in heroin; conspiracy to traffic in cocaine; conspiracy to commit first-degree murder to further the interests of a criminal gang; conspiracy to commit aggravated battery upon a person who is being detained in a prison, jail, or other detention facility to further the interests of a criminal gang; and directing the activities of a criminal gang. Each count is a first-degree felony or higher.

The defendants are: **Hugo E. Cruz**, aka Houdini; **Carlos H. Martinez**, aka Carlos Maya-Reyes, aka Indio; **Rachel Gonzalez**, aka Loka; **Adolfo Magana, Jr.**; **Brayn L. Trejo**; **Dennis A. Perkins**; **Reba B. Perkins**; **Juan Carlos Cruz**, aka Spider, aka Arana; **Joseph W. Whitehead, Jr.**; **Juan S. Guijosa, Jr.**; **Omar Hernandez**; **Valentin Gomez**; **Esmeralda Guevara**; **Andres Bustamante**; **Johnny Cisnero**; **Franklin Guillen Lara**; **Jose Francisco Ramirez**, aka Chico; **Ruben Quinones**, aka Yago; **Efren Berumen**, aka Brownie, aka Brown Aguila; **Jonathan**

Martinez, aka J-Blue; **Stephanie Martinez**, aka Lady Blue; **Thomas E. Busby, II**, aka Gutta; **Mary Osorio**; **Jose F. Martinez**, aka Guapo; **Gregory Enegess**, aka Poet.

Investigators found that Lara conducted a hand-to-hand drug transaction, delivering two ounces of methamphetamine and two ounces of fentanyl to an undercover law enforcement confidential informant. Gomez operated a stash house, which is where gangs often hide drugs, money, and firearms.

Valentin Gomez, another SUR-13 member, open pled to armed trafficking in amphetamine, armed trafficking in fentanyl, armed trafficking in cocaine, which are all life felonies, on January 30, 2026.

The Office of Statewide Prosecution worked with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to arrest the final defendant from the initial 25 defendants targeted during Operation 13 Tiers. Efren Berumen was arrested in Osceola County on February 7, 2026.

Gomez will be sentenced on March 3, 2026. Lara will be sentenced on March 9, 2026.

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