



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

TODD P. GRAVES

Contact Don Ledford, Public Affairs • (816) 426-4220 • 400 East Ninth Street, Room 5510 • Kansas City, MO 64106

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow

FEBRUARY 25, 2003
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OPERATION COCAINE COWBOYS
CO-DEFENDANT IN COCAINE RING SENTENCED FOR
INVOLVEMENT IN CONSPIRACY

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Carthage, Mo., resident was sentenced in federal court today for his role in a conspiracy to distribute more than 500 grams of cocaine in Jasper County, Mo.

The co-defendant is part of Operation Cocaine Cowboys, which charged a total of 36 federal defendants with illegal drug trafficking and firearms sales in southwest Missouri.

Manuel Sanchez-Villagran, 33, of Carthage, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr this morning to five years in federal prison without parole. The court also ordered **Villagran** to forfeit \$32,540 in assets gained from his involvement in the crime. On Oct. 16, 2002, **Villagran** pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine from Nov. 14, 1999 to Nov. 25, 2001.

Four other co-defendants also recently were sentenced for their involvement in the conspiracy in southwest Missouri.

Danna S. Smith, 30, of Carthage, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr on Jan. 28, 2002 to one year and six months in federal prison without parole. On Oct. 21, 2002, **Smith** pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine from Nov. 14, 1999 to Nov. 25, 2001.

Amy Reyes, 33, of Anderson, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr on Jan. 28, 2002 to two years in federal prison without parole. On Oct. 21, 2002, **Reyes** pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute 500 grams or more of cocaine from Nov. 14, 1999 to Nov. 25, 2001.

Deanna L. Brady, 23, of Carthage, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr on Jan. 28, 2002, to one year in federal prison without parole. On Oct. 16, 2002, **Brady** pleaded guilty to intentionally distributing cocaine on Nov. 22, 1999.

Caasimoro G. Gonzales, 58, of Carthage, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr on Jan. 27, 2002, to nine years in federal prison without parole. On Oct. 10, 2002, **Gonzales** pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute cocaine. By pleading guilty, **Gonzales** also agreed to the federal forfeiture of \$32,000 in proceeds obtained from that criminal violation.

A total of 15 co-defendants have been convicted for their involvement in this case (U.S. v. **Caasimoro G. Gonzales**) and another 10 have been sentenced. The case includes 17 co-defendants in a 52-count indictment. Graves explained that this case is part of a series of federal indictments and federal criminal complaints filed in January and February 2002 as a result of the 27-month, multi-agency investigation into illegal drug trafficking and firearms sales.

Operation Cocaine Cowboy focused on an organization of individuals who were allegedly responsible for the delivery and distribution of multi-kilogram quantities of cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana and other drugs from sources in California, Texas and Guatemala. As charged in a series of federal indictments and federal criminal complaints, Graves explained, 36 federal defendants allegedly distributed illegal narcotics, primarily in Jasper County, but also in at least four other Southwest Missouri counties (Christian, Greene, Lawrence and Webster) and elsewhere. Graves said that undercover officers made numerous purchases of illegal drugs and weapons as part of the investigation. In addition to the federal defendants, about 26 other individuals, including adults and juveniles, face a variety of state charges in related cases.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Randall D. Eggert. Operation Cocaine Cowboys was investigated by officers from the Missouri States Highway Patrol and the Combined Ozarks Multijurisdictional Enforcement Team (COMET), in cooperation with numerous other law enforcement agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, Jasper County Drug Task Force, Mid-States Organized Crime Information Center (MOCIC), and the Carthage Police Department. Assistance to Operation Cocaine Cowboys was provided by Greene, Jasper and Stone counties' sheriff's departments, the Joplin, Springfield, Oronogo and Webb City police departments and the U.S. Marshal's Service.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow