



# Department of Justice

## United States Attorney Jill Westmoreland Rose Western District of North Carolina

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### **LEADER OF MAJOR DRUG TRAFFICKING RING AND SEVEN CO-CONSPIRATORS SENTENCED TO PRISON**

#### ***Drug Conspiracy Was Responsible for Trafficking more than 450 Kilograms of Cocaine to Western North Carolina and Funneling Millions in Drug Proceeds Back to Mexico***

STATESVILLE, N.C. – One of the leaders and seven co-conspirators of a major drug ring responsible for trafficking more than 450 kilograms of cocaine to Western North Carolina and funneling millions in drug proceeds back to Mexico were sentenced earlier this week, announced Jill Westmoreland Rose, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina. U.S. District Judge Richard L. Voorhees presided over the sentencing hearings.

The eight men sentenced on Monday and Tuesday in federal court in Statesville are:

- David Maldonado-Rendon, 33, of Mexico – Sentenced to 210 months and five years of supervised release.
- Pedro Maldonado-Sanchez, 24, of Mexico – Sentenced to 87 months and five years of supervised release.
- Larry Woodley, 26, of Landon, S.C. – Sentenced to 66 months and three years of supervised release.
- Juan Pablo Diaz-Herrera, 26, of Troutman, N.C. – Sentenced to 57 months and three years of supervised release.
- Germaine Woodley, 42, of Waxhaw, N.C. – Sentenced to 48 months and three years of supervised release. He was also ordered to forfeit \$1.2 million in drug proceeds.
- Miguel Ibarra-Espinoza, 35, of Mexico – Sentenced to 46 months and five years of supervised release.
- Alberto Pedraza, 56, of Farmville, N.C. – Sentenced to 46 months and three years of supervised release.
- Brian Maldonado-Reyes, 22, of Madera, California – Sentenced to eight months and three years of supervised release.

Three more main participants of the drug conspiracy, Fortino Maldonado-Guillen, James Davis, and the drug ring's co-leader Maria Abernethy, aka Rosy Maldonado, will be sentenced on June 8, 2016. Two other indicted co-conspirators, Saloman Maldonado and Saul Maldonado-

Guillen, aka Valeria Maldonado-Guillen, remain fugitives. Over the course of the investigation, law enforcement also seized approximately \$750,000 in U.S. currency, six vehicles and five properties.

According to filed documents and statements made during court proceedings:

Over the course of the conspiracy, which lasted from about 2010 to about November 2014, David Maldonado, at first working with his uncle, Fortino Maldonado, and later with his wife, Rosy Maldonado, established a drug trafficking operation responsible for distributing approximately 450 kilograms of cocaine to Western North Carolina, South Carolina and elsewhere. James Davis, Germaine Woodley and his brother, Larry Woodley, were David Maldonado's main buyers. At different times, the remaining co-conspirators operated as drivers, or "drug mules," for the drug conspiracy.

#### **February to July 2011 – David Maldonado and Fortino Maldonado**

From about February 2011, David Maldonado and Fortino Maldonado began trafficking cocaine that Fortino Maldonado obtained from a source in Virginia. The two men trafficked between two and 10 kilograms of cocaine at a time, and resold it mainly to James Davis, Germaine and Larry Woodley and other local cocaine dealers. Between February and July 2011, David and Fortino Maldonado trafficked approximately 100 kilograms of cocaine and received approximately \$3.2 million in drug proceeds.

#### **December 2011 to November 2014 – David Maldonado and Rosy Maldonado**

In or about December 2011, David Maldonado and his wife, Rosy Maldonado, began trafficking large amounts of cocaine supplied by a source in Mexico known to Rosy Maldonado. From about December 2011 to about November 2014, David and Rosy Maldonado and their co-conspirators trafficked approximately 350 kilograms of cocaine and received more than \$11 million in drug proceeds. David and Rosy Maldonado funneled most of the drug proceeds back to Mexico, after keeping a portion of the money for running the drug conspiracy.

Over the course of the conspiracy, Rosy and David Maldonado made multiple trips to Texas to pick up the packaged cocaine from their Mexican supplier, which they transported back to North Carolina hidden in compartments the pair had installed in numerous vehicles. These secret compartments were located at different areas of the vehicles, depending on the type of car used, including under the front passenger seat, the rear bench seat, the vehicle's truck bed and elsewhere. Some of the hidden compartments were large enough to transport as much as 19 kilograms in a single trip. Each time the pair picked up the packaged cocaine from Texas, they delivered large cash payments to their Mexican supply source. For example, between August and November 2012, the pair transported approximately 65 kilograms of cocaine from Texas and delivered approximately \$1.7 million in U.S. currency.

Sometime after September 2013, Rosy and David Maldonado hired Juan Pablo Diaz-Herrera and Brian Maldonado-Reyes as drivers for the conspiracy. Juan Diaz and Brian Maldonado began transporting the cocaine and cash to and from Texas in the same manner. The conspiracy began to unravel when, in November 2013, law enforcement in Gulfport, Mississippi stopped the vehicle Juan Diaz and Brian Maldonado were driving to Texas, seizing more than \$392,000 in cash.

“This highly active drug ring was responsible for trafficking hundreds of kilos of cocaine to the area,” said U.S. Attorney Rose in making today’s announcement. “I want to thank the multiple law enforcement agencies in North Carolina and other states for their hard work over the course of this investigation. Working with our law enforcement partners, we effectively traced and dismantled this poisonous pipeline of cocaine that has undoubtedly destroyed many lives and has affected the families of those addicted to the drug.”

In addition to the prison terms, the Judge Voorhees ordered David Maldonado, Pedro Maldonado and Miguel Ibarra to be deported to Mexico upon completion of their respective prison terms. All federal sentences are served without the possibility of parole.

The case is the result of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF is a joint federal, state and local cooperative approach to combat drug trafficking and is the nation’s primary tool for disrupting and dismantling major drug trafficking organizations, targeting national and regional drug trafficking organizations and coordinating the necessary law enforcement entities and resources to disrupt or dismantle the targeted criminal organization and seize their assets.

In making today’s announcement, U.S. Attorney Rose thanked the multiple agencies involved in this case for their investigative efforts and assistance in dismantling this major drug trafficking ring. Specifically, U.S. Attorney Rose commended the work of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division; the United States Marshals Service; the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); the Matthews Police Department; the Pineville Police Department; the Monroe Police Department; the Gastonia Police Department; the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department; the Cornelius Police Department; the Gaston County Sheriff’s Office; the Union County Sheriff’s Office; the Iredell County Sheriff’s Office; the Beaufort County Sheriff’s Office; the Gilford County Sheriff’s Office; the Charleston County Sheriff’s Office; the Mississippi Highway Patrol; and the Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Intelligence Center.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Elizabeth Greene led the prosecution for the U.S. Attorney’s Office. Assistant U.S. Attorney Sanjeev Bhasker handled the sentencings of the defendants.

*United States v. Abernethy et al.*; Case Number 5:14-cr-72.

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