

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

## Press Center



## Treasury Designates Major Mexican Chemical Traffickers

4/12/2012

*Major Methamphetamine Supply Route Targeted with Today's Action*

**WASHINGTON** – The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) today designated Ezio Benjamin Figueroa Vasquez and his son, Hasein Eduardo Figueroa Gomez, as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act) for their significant role in international narcotics trafficking, as well as 16 of their companies in Mexico and Panama. The Kingpin Act prohibits U.S. persons from conducting financial or commercial transactions with these individuals and entities, and it freezes any assets the designees may have under U.S. jurisdiction.

Figueroa Vasquez and Figueroa Gomez lead an international precursor chemical trafficking organization responsible for the diversion and importation of multi-ton quantities of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine from Europe and sub-Saharan Africa into Mexico. The organization distributes these precursor materials to major Mexican drug trafficking organizations which manufacture methamphetamine in Mexico for ultimate distribution in the United States.

"Working closely with the Government of Mexico, OFAC is today sanctioning two significant traffickers who for years circumvented Mexican drug control laws to import massive amounts of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine into Mexico," said OFAC Director Adam J. Szubin. "Together with our colleagues in the U.S. and Mexican governments, we will continue to target the activities of these criminals and other precursor chemical networks."

On November 2, 2011, Figueroa Vasquez and Figueroa Gomez were indicted by a federal grand jury in the Eastern District of Virginia. They are accused of conspiring to commit money laundering in connection with their alleged precursor chemical trafficking. The indictment was unsealed on April 11, 2012.

In September 2011, Mexican authorities arrested Figueroa Vasquez, and he remains in Mexican custody today. The 16 companies designated today in Mexico and Panama range in business activities from real estate and construction to pharmaceutical activity. Among these companies are Mexico City-based pharmaceutical companies Geofarma, S.A. de C.V. and Distribuidora Medica Hospitalaria, S.A. de C.V. as well as Guadalajara-based construction and housing development companies Promociones Citadel, S.A. de C.V. and Desarrollo Arquitectonico Fortia, S.A. de C.V.

Today's action would not have been possible without key support from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia. The Government of Belgium also assisted OFAC in this action. This cooperation is part of a global effort to interdict Mexican drug trafficking organizations' access to materials needed for the illicit production of methamphetamine.

"This organization for years served as a major facilitator on behalf of some of the most violent, brutal Mexico-based drug networks in the world," said DEA Chief of Financial Operations John Arvanitis. "The biggest cartels in the world rely on organizations like this one to secure huge amounts of precursor chemicals like ephedrine and pseudoephedrine to produce massive amounts of meth that ends up in communities across the United States. Using every tool at our disposal, such as this Treasury designation, will go a long way towards ensuring that this organization is dismantled."

Pursuant to the Kingpin Act, the Treasury Department has designated more than 1,000 individuals and entities linked to drug kingpins since June 2000. Penalties for violations of the Kingpin Act range from civil penalties of up to \$1.075 million per violation to more severe criminal penalties. Criminal penalties for corporate officers may include up to 30 years in prison and fines up to \$5 million. Criminal fines for corporations may reach \$10 million. Other individuals face up to 10 years in prison and fines pursuant to Title 18 of the United States Code for criminal violations of the Kingpin Act.

To view a chart of the Figueroa Vasquez network, click [here](#) .

