

# Treasury Sanctions Guatemalan Mayor and His Drug Trafficking Organization

December 19, 2019

**Washington** – Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) identified Guatemalan mayor Erik Salvador Suñiga Rodriguez, known as “El Pocho,” and the Suñiga Rodriguez drug trafficking organization (Suñiga Rodriguez DTO or “Los Pochos DTO”) as significant foreign narcotics traffickers pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act). OFAC designated four additional Guatemalan nationals for providing material support to Erik Suñiga Rodriguez and the Suñiga Rodriguez DTO. Additionally, OFAC designated five Guatemalan businesses owned or controlled by these individuals.

“Drug addiction affects thousands of families across the United States. Treasury will stop those who help fuel this deadly epidemic from using the U.S. financial system,” said Deputy Secretary Justin G. Muzinich.

OFAC coordinated closely with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, the Government of Guatemala, U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service, U.S. Southern Command, and other U.S. Government partners in order to execute today’s action.

A multi-agency task force coordinated by the Department of Justice’s Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) also played an integral role in today’s action. The principal mission of the OCDETF program is to identify, disrupt, and dismantle the most serious drug trafficking, weapons trafficking and money laundering organizations that are primarily responsible for the nation’s illegal drug supply. Multiple U.S. agencies are involved in this OCDETF action, including the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Texas.

Guatemala’s location is of strategic importance to traffickers. Because of Guatemala’s shared border with Mexico, Mexican cartels rely on Guatemalan networks and organizations to receive, store, and transport drugs to the United States through Mexico. In addition, around 45 percent of motorboats transporting cocaine from South America stop in Guatemala.

Erik Suñiga Rodriguez is a major drug trafficker in Guatemala who supplies cocaine to Mexico’s Sinaloa Cartel. As mayor of the Municipality of Ayutla since 2008, Erik Suñiga Rodriguez controls

narcotics trafficking activities at the Guatemalan-Mexico border, using corrupt local law enforcement officials to assist him with illicit activities. In 2018, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Texas charged Erik Suñiga Rodriguez with trafficking cocaine to the United States.

The drug trafficking organization led by Erik Suñiga Rodriguez is based in Guatemala and focuses its resources on smuggling cocaine into the United States. The Suñiga Rodriguez DTO includes two associates and various immediate family members. Erik Suñiga Rodriguez's key drug trafficking associates who are being designated today are Wildin Tulio Jui Escobar, Juan Carlos Cruz Ovalle, his brother Jose Juan Suñiga Rodriguez, and his half-brother Alex Oswaldo Parada Rodriguez. Wildin Tulio Jui Escobar was recently arrested by Guatemalan authorities under narcotics trafficking charges and for belonging to a criminal syndicate. Juan Carlos Cruz Ovalle, a.k.a. "El Hielero," was previously arrested in 2013 Guatemala under murder charges, attempted murder, and for association with a drug trafficking group. Jose Juan Suñiga Rodriguez provides transportation services for the Suñiga Rodriguez DTO, and Alex Oswaldo Parada Rodriguez, a.k.a. "La Pantera," is one of Erik Suñiga Rodriguez's top lieutenants.

In addition, OFAC designated five entities that are owned or controlled by Erik Suñiga Rodriguez's drug trafficking associates. The designated entities are Multiservicios y Finca El Encanto (an agricultural company), Rancho La Dorada (an agricultural company), Cevicheria La Concha (a restaurant), Star Market Melanye (a grocery store), and JC Car Audio (a car audio store). All of the entities designated today are registered in the Guatemalan Department of San Marcos.

Since June 2000, more than 2,200 entities and individuals have been identified as significant foreign narcotics traffickers or otherwise designated pursuant to the Kingpin Act for their role in international narcotics trafficking.

As a result of today's action, all assets in which these persons have an interest in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons must be blocked and reported to OFAC. OFAC's regulations generally prohibit all dealings by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of blocked persons.

[Identifying information on the individuals designated today.](#)

[The Kingpin Act chart on individuals and entities designated today](#) .

[Information about the Kingpin Act](#) .

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