

Treasury Sanctions Sinaloa Cartel Members Operating in Sonora

September 22, 2021

*OFAC action targets individuals trafficking fentanyl and other drugs
at the direction of Sinaloa Cartel leader Ismael Zambada Garcia*

Washington — Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury’s Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated Mexican national Sergio Valenzuela Valenzuela (“Valenzuela Valenzuela”) as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act (Kingpin Act).

Based in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, Valenzuela Valenzuela is a Sinaloa Cartel plaza boss. In that role, he oversees a major drug trafficking corridor in Mexico, is responsible for smuggling tons of fentanyl and other drugs into the United States, and reports directly to the leader of the Sinaloa Cartel, Ismael Zambada Garcia (a.k.a. “El Mayo”). Zambada Garcia was identified as a significant narcotics trafficker pursuant to the Kingpin Act in 2002 and is also the subject of a State Department Narcotics Rewards Program offer. Valenzuela Valenzuela was designated today for materially assisting in, providing financial or technological support for or to, or providing goods or services in support of the international narcotics trafficking activities of the Sinaloa Cartel and Zambada Garcia. Additionally, seven other Mexican nationals and two Mexican entities were also designated today. Today’s action is the result of OFAC’s ongoing collaboration with the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) Phoenix Field Division Financial Investigations Group, San Diego Field Division Strike Force Group Three, and the Mexico City Country Office.

“Treasury’s action against Sergio Valenzuela Valenzuela demonstrates OFAC’s commitment to targeting high-level Sinaloa Cartel operatives, particularly those who traffic or facilitate the delivery of synthetic opioids to the United States,” said OFAC Director Andrea Gacki.

Valenzuela Valenzuela leads a poly-drug smuggling organization responsible for the transportation and importation of multi-ton quantities of illicit drugs, including methamphetamine, heroin, and fentanyl, from Mexico to the United States. In September 2018, a federal drug trafficking indictment was returned in the U.S. District Court for the

Southern District of California against Valenzuela Valenzuela, who is currently a fugitive from the charges.

In addition to Valenzuela Valenzuela, OFAC also designated seven other Mexican nationals for providing material assistance to Valenzuela Valenzuela. Specifically, the individuals include Valenzuela Valenzuela's right-hand man, Leonardo Pineda Armenta, who directs operations for him, and six cartel lieutenants who ultimately report to Valenzuela Valenzuela: Gilberto Martinez Renteria, Jaime Humberto Gonzalez Higuera, Jorge Damian Roman Figueroa, Luis Alberto Carrillo Jimenez, Meliton Rochin Hurtado, and Miguel Raymundo Marrufo Cabrera. Additionally, OFAC designated two companies in Mexico for being owned or controlled by Rochin Hurtado and Marrufo Cabrera, Acuaindustria Narciso Mendoza, S.C. de R.L. de C.V. and Club Indios Rojos de Juarez, S.A. de C.V.

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of the designated individuals and entities that are 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 transactions by U.S. persons or persons within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons.

Since June 2000, more than 2,200 entities and individuals have been sanctioned pursuant to the Kingpin Act for their role in international narcotics trafficking. Penalties for violations of the Kingpin Act range from civil penalties of up to \$1,548,075 per violation to more severe criminal penalties. Criminal penalties for corporate officers may include up to 30 years in prison and fines of up to \$5 million. Criminal fines for corporations may reach \$10 million. Other individuals could 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.

[View more information on the network designated today.](#)

[View the Kingpin Act chart on the network designated today](#) .

[View more information on the Narcotics Rewards Program.](#)