

Treasury Sanctions Guatemala's Los Huistas Drug Trafficking Organization with Ties to Mexican Cartels

March 18, 2022

WASHINGTON – Today, the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) designated the Los Huistas Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) and its leaders pursuant to Executive Order (E.O.) 14059 for drug trafficking that threatens the people and security of the United States and Guatemala.

The Los Huistas DTO is the dominant criminal structure in the Guatemalan department of Huehuetenango (along the border of Guatemala and Mexico). Today's action is the result of collaboration with the Government of Guatemala and the U.S. Departments of Justice, State, Defense, and Homeland Security, including Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the U.S. Southern Command, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection's **National Targeting Center**.

“Criminal groups such as the Los Huistas DTO contribute to instability in Guatemala and the region,” said Under Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Brian E. Nelson. “The Los Huistas DTO smuggles deadly narcotics, including cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin, from Guatemala through Mexico for distribution in multiple U.S. cities. Treasury and our U.S. and Guatemalan government partners will continue to use every available resource to dismantle these criminal networks.”

The Los Huistas DTO, Eugenio Dario Molina Lopez, and Alec Baldomero Samayoa Recinos (a.k.a. “Chicharra”) were designated for having engaged in, or attempted to engage in, activities or transactions that materially contributed to, or pose a significant risk of materially contributing to, the international proliferation of illicit drugs or their means of production. Since at least 2012, Molina Lopez and Samayoa Recinos have led the Los Huistas DTO, which operates in the strategically important area along the Guatemala-Mexico border.

The Los Huistas DTO smuggles cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin from its base in northern Guatemala to the United States using Mexican organizations such as the Sinaloa Cartel and the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG). The Los Huistas DTO

also produces heroin and manufactures methamphetamine for export to the United States. Cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin consumed in the United States are frequently laced with fentanyl, which can significantly increase the possibility of overdose and death for its users. The Los Huistas DTO controls poppy cultivation fields in the mountainous region spanning the Guatemalan departments of Huehuetenango and San Marcos and has imported precursor chemicals from China to manufacture methamphetamine. The Los Huistas DTO's centralized and hierarchical organization also engages in money laundering.

Eugenio Dario Molina Lopez directly oversees all Los Huistas DTO operations. Molina Lopez is primarily engaged in trafficking multi-ton quantities of cocaine from South and Central America into Mexico. In 2019, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California indicted him on multiple drug trafficking charges based upon an HSI-led investigation. The U.S. Department of State offers a reward of up to \$10 million for information leading to his arrest and/or conviction.

Aler Baldomero Samayoa Recinos (a.k.a. "Chicharra") oversees a trafficking operation that coordinates the transportation of cocaine shipments from Huehuetenango, Guatemala into the Mexican state of Chiapas. Samayoa Recinos is also engaged in money laundering activities on behalf of the Los Huistas DTO. In 2018, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia indicted Samayoa Recinos on drug trafficking based upon a DEA-led investigation.


OFAC designated other key members of the Los Huistas DTO, all Guatemalan nationals. **Axel Bladimir Montejo Saenz (Montejo Saenz)**, Molina Lopez's son-in-law, serves as a primary lieutenant for the organization and coordinates transportation of narcotics, many of which end up on the streets of the United States. In 2017, the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California indicted Montejo Saenz on drug trafficking charges based upon an HSI-led investigation. **Freddy Arnoldo Salazar Flores (Salazar Flores)**, Samayoa Recinos's son-in-law, is responsible for transporting and storing cocaine shipments on behalf of Los Huistas DTO. Salazar Flores is a Central American Parliament member representing Guatemala. In 2016, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia indicted him on drug trafficking charges based on a DEA-led investigation. Both Montejo Saenz and Salazar Flores were designated for having engaged in, or attempting to engage in, activities or transactions that materially contributed to, or pose a significant risk of materially contributing to, the international proliferation of illicit drugs or their means of production.

Werner Dario Molina Montejo (Molina Montejo), Molina Lopez's son, is a Los Huistas DTO member supporting his father's business affairs. **Ervin Rene Moreno Lopez (Moreno Lopez)** is the accountant for a company controlled by Molina Lopez. Both Molina Montejo and Moreno Lopez were designated for having acted or purported to act for and on behalf of, directly or indirectly, Los Huistas DTO.

Roger Antulio Samayoa Montejo (Samayoa Montejo) is Samayoa Recinos's son and lieutenant and coordinates Los Huistas DTO operations. Samayoa Montejo was designated for having acted or purported to act for and on behalf of Samayoa Recinos and Los Huistas DTO.

OFAC also designated the coffee company Compradores y Exportadores Cafe Captzin, Sociedad Anonima, based in La Democracia, Huehuetenango, for being owned, controlled, or directed by, directly or indirectly, Molina Lopez.

SANCTIONS IMPLICATIONS

Today's designation is part of an interagency effort to address the national emergency declared through [E.O. 14059](#)  and the extraordinary threat that the global drug trade poses to the national security, foreign policy, and economy of the United States.

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of the designated individuals or 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. U.S. persons may face civil or criminal penalties for violations of E.O. 14059.

U.S. sanctions need not be permanent; sanctions are intended to bring about a positive change of behavior. Consistent with the findings of Treasury's Sanctions Review, the removal of sanctions is available for designated persons designated under counter narcotics authorities who demonstrate a change in behavior and no longer engage in activities linked to international illicit drug trafficking activities or with other designated persons. For detailed information on the process to submit a request for removal from an OFAC sanctions list, please visit: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/specially-designated-nationals-list-sdn-list/filing-a-petition-for-removal-from-an-ofac-list>

For information concerning the process for seeking removal from any OFAC list, including the Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons List (SDN List), please refer to OFAC's [Frequently Asked Question 897](#). Additional information regarding sanctions programs administered by OFAC can be found [here](#).

[For more information on the persons designated today.](#)

[View the Executive Order chart on the persons designated today.](#) 

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