



# Department of Justice

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## **HIGH-RANKING MS-13 FUGITIVE ARRESTED ON TERRORISM INDICTMENT**

### ***Defendant Was Influential Member of the Ranfla Nacional, MS-13's Board of Directors that Directed Transnational Criminal Operations***

Today, at the conclusion of a removal hearing, a federal court in Houston, Texas ordered Elmer Canales-Rivera, also known as “Crook de Hollywood,” a high-ranking leader of La Mara Salvatrucha, also known as MS-13, to be transferred in custody to the Eastern District of New York where he and 13 other high-ranking MS-13 leaders were indicted in December 2020 on terrorism offenses relating to their direction of the transnational criminal organization’s criminal activities in the United States, El Salvador, Mexico and elsewhere over the past two decades.

On November 9 2023, Canales-Rivera was arrested by members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), and the United States Marshals Service (USMS), when he arrived at George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston, Texas. Specifically, Canales-Rivera has been charged with conspiracy to provide and conceal material support to terrorists, conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism transcending national boundaries, conspiracy to finance terrorism and narco-terrorism conspiracy.

Merrick B. Garland, United States Attorney General; Breon Peace, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York (EDNY); Christopher A. Wray, Director, FBI; and Alejandro N. Mayorkas, Secretary of Homeland Security announced Canales-Rivera’s arrest and initial appearance.

“We allege that Elmer Canales-Rivera, a founding member of MS-13’s ‘Twelve Apostles of the Devil,’ bears responsibility for the gang’s efforts over decades to terrorize communities, target law enforcement, and sow violence here in the United States and abroad,” said Attorney General Merrick B. Garland. “The arrest of this high-ranking, long-time leader of MS-13 should serve as a warning to MS-13’s other leaders that the Justice Department will hold you accountable for your crimes.”

“The defendant’s appearance in a federal courtroom today in the United States is a giant step in holding him accountable for his significant role as an alleged member of the MS-13 gang’s leadership body known as the ‘Twelve Apostles of the Devil’ and later renamed

*Ranfla Nacional*,” stated United States Attorney Peace. “As alleged, Canales-Rivera along with his co-defendants acted as a board of directors, directing acts of violence, intimidation and material support of terrorists in El Salvador and throughout the United States including in the Eastern District of New York where he will appear next in a federal courtroom in Central Islip to answer these charges.”

This case was brought by Joint Task Force Vulcan (JTFV), which was created to combat MS-13, led by Assistant United States Attorney John J. Durham of the EDNY, and comprised of U.S. Attorney’s Offices across the country, including the District of New Jersey; the Northern District of Ohio; the District of Utah; the District of Massachusetts; the Eastern District of Texas; the Southern District of New York; the Southern District of Florida; the Eastern District of Virginia; the Southern District of California; the District of Nevada; the District of Alaska; and the District of Columbia, as well as other government agencies and offices have been essential partners in JTFV, including the Department of Justice’s National Security Division and the Criminal Division, the FBI; HSI; the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the USMS; the U.S. Bureau of Prisons; and the United States Agency for International Development, Office of Inspector General.

Mr. Peace expressed his thanks to the FBI’s Los Angeles Field Office, which has spearheaded JTFV’s MS-13 leadership investigations, with critical support provided by the Criminal Investigative Division’s Safe Streets Gang Unit, along with HSI’s National Gangs and Violent Crime Unit and HSI’s New York and Houston Field Offices. Additionally, FBI Legal Attachés in Mexico City and San Salvador, FBI Houston Field Office, HSI Attaché Mexico City, USMS Legal Attaché in Mexico City and the United States Customs and Border Protection Officers at the George Bush Intercontinental Airport in Houston provided critical support in connection with the arrest, as well as the U.S. Attorney's Office and the USMS for the Southern District of Texas for coordinating the initial appearance in Houston.

Mr. Peace also thanked the numerous Department of Justice components that contributed to this indictment, including: the National Security Division’s Counterterrorism Section; the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces Executive Office; the Justice Department’s Office of International Affairs; and the Criminal Division’s Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, Assistance and Training. In addition, the Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and the United States Department of Treasury, Office of Foreign Asset Control have provided valuable assistance for JTFV’s mission.

“With determination and coordinated effort, the FBI and our law enforcement and foreign partners successfully apprehended a violent criminal that directly threatened the safety of our communities,” said FBI Director Christopher A. Wray. “This pursuit exemplifies the FBI’s commitment to safeguard the American public and continued promise to dismantle criminal networks like MS-13.”

“This arrest makes it clear that there is no hiding place for leaders of criminal syndicates that threaten our communities,” said Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas. “Through the dedication and investigative abilities of HSI agents and our federal

partners, we are taking on criminal organizations like MS-13 and helping to bring all those who perpetrate transnational crimes to justice.”

As set forth in the indictment, which was returned on December 16, 2020 and unsealed on January 14, 2021, and related court filings, Canales-Rivera and his co-defendants are part of MS-13’s command and control structure, consisting of the *Ranfla Nacional*, *Ranfla en Las Calles*, and *Ranfla en Los Penales*. They play significant leadership roles in the organization’s operations in El Salvador, Mexico, the United States, and throughout the world. In total, 27 of the highest-ranking leaders of MS-13 have been charged in the Eastern District of New York in this indictment and the related indictment of [United States v. Arevalo-Chavez, et al.](#)

As further alleged, in approximately 2002, Canales-Rivera, his co-defendants, and other MS-13 leaders began establishing a highly-organized, hierarchical command and control structure as a means to effectuate their decisions and enforce their orders, even while in prison. They directed acts of violence and murder in El Salvador, the United States, and elsewhere, established military-style training camps for its members and obtained military weapons such as rifles, handguns, grenades, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and rocket launchers. Further, beginning in approximately 2012, Canales-Rivera and other members of the *Ranfla Nacional* negotiated with officials from the government of El Salvador (GOES) and obtained benefits and concessions from the GOES. In order to extract those benefits and concessions from GOES, MS-13 engaged in public displays of violence to threaten and intimidate civilian populations, targeted GOES law enforcement and military officials, and manipulated the electoral process in El Salvador. Canales-Rivera played one of the most prominent roles in MS-13’s negotiations and agreements with the GOES.

Additionally, as alleged, the *Ranfla Nacional* directed the expansion of MS-13 activities around the world, including the United States and Mexico, where several high-ranking leaders were sent to organize operations, make connections to obtain narcotics and firearms from Mexican drug cartels such as the Zetas, Gulf Cartel, *Cártel de Jalisco Nueva Generación* (CJNG) and Sinaloa Cartel, and engage in human trafficking and smuggling. The *Ranfla Nacional* also directed MS-13’s large membership in the United States to engage in criminal activities, such as drug trafficking and extortion to raise money to support MS-13’s terrorist activities in El Salvador and elsewhere.

Finally, the *Ranfla Nacional* and MS-13’s transnational leadership structure is alleged to have directed members in the United States to commit acts of violence, including murders, to further its goals and implemented rules that enabled MS-13 to entrench itself in parts of the United States, including within the EDNY where, under the defendants’ leadership and rules, MS-13 has committed numerous acts of violence—including murders, attempted murders, assaults, kidnappings, drug trafficking, extortion of individuals and businesses, obstructed justice and sent dues and the proceeds of criminal activity by wire transfer to MS-13 leaders in El Salvador. For example, this Office’s Long Island Criminal Division has prosecuted hundreds of MS-13 leaders, members, and associates for carrying out more than 65 murders in the Eastern District of New York between 2009 and the present.

When the indictment was unsealed in January 2021, Canales-Rivera was in custody in El Salvador serving a prison sentence, and the United States lodged an INTERPOL Red Notice and submitted an extradition request for Canales-Rivera to the GOES. However, in or about November 2021, Canales-Rivera was released from custody by the GOES and then unlawfully entered Guatemala. Canales-Rivera remained a fugitive until November 7, 2023, when he was apprehended by Mexican authorities.

Further, in addition to requesting Canales-Rivera's extradition, in 2021 and 2022, the United States requested the extradition of 11 of his co-defendants, including Borrromeo Enrique Henriquez, also known as "Diablito de Hollywood," who is widely recognized as the most powerful member of the *Ranfla Nacional*. To date, the GOES has not extradited any of those defendants.

Two of Canales-Rivera's co-defendants, Fredy Ivan Jandres-Parada, also known as "Lucky de Park View" and "Lacky de Park View," and Cesar Humberto Lopez-Larios, also known as "El Grenas de Stoners" and "Oso de Stoners," and three related defendants from the Arevalo-Chavez indictment, Jorge Alexander De La Cruz, also known as "Cruger de Peatonales," Juan Antonio Martinez-Abrego, also known as "Mary Jane de Hollywood," and Francisco Javier Roman-Bardales, also known as "Veterano de Tribus," remain at large. Members of the public with information concerning their whereabouts are strongly encouraged to contact the FBI's toll-free MS-13 tip line, 1-866-STP-MS13 (1-866-787-6713), or HSI's tip line at (866) 347-2423 or <https://www.ice.gov/webform/ice-tip-form>. Together, FBI and HSI have offered a \$20,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the fugitives.

These charges are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. If convicted, Canales-Rivera faces a maximum sentence of life in prison.

The government's case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys John J. Durham, Paul G. Scotti, Justina L. Geraci, and Megan E. Farrell from the Office's Long Island Criminal Division, with assistance from Assistant U.S. Attorneys James Donnelly (District of New Jersey), Matthew Shepherd (Northern District of Ohio), and Stewart Young (District of Utah) from JTFV.

**Newly Arrested Defendant in U.S. Custody:**

ELMER CANALES-RIVERA ("Crook de Hollywood")

Age: 47

**Fugitive Defendants:**

FREDY IVAN JANDRES-PARADA ("Lucky de Park View" and "Lacky de Park View")

Age: 47

CESAR HUMBERTO LOPEZ-LARIOS ("El Grenas de Stoners" and "Oso de Stoners")

Age: 44

**Defendants with Pending Extradition Requests, Reportedly in El Salvador Custody:**

BORROMEO ENRIQUE HENRIQUEZ (“Diablito de Hollywood”)

Age: 45

EFRAIN CORTEZ (“Tigre de Park View” and “Viejo Tigre de Park View”)

Age: 54

RICARDO ALBERTO DIAZ (“Rata de Leewards” and “Mousey de Leewards”)

Age: 50

EDUARDO ERAZO-NOLASCO (“Colocho de Western” and “Mustage de Western”)

Age: 51

EDSON SACHARY EUFEMIA (“Speedy de Park View”)

Age: 49

JOSE FERNANDEZ FLORES-CUBAS (“Cola de Western”)

Age: 49

LEONEL ALEXANDER LEONARDO (“El Necio de San Cocos”)

Age: 43

JOSE LUIS MENDOZA-FIGUEROA (“Pavas de 7-11” and “Viejo Pavas de 7-11”)

Age: 59

HUGO ARMANDO QUINTEROS-MINEROS (“Flaco de Francis”)

Age: 50

SAUL ANTONIO TURCIOS (“Trece de Teclas”)

Age: 45

ARISTIDES DIONISIO UMANZOR (“Sirra de Teclas”)

Age: 45

E.D.N.Y. Docket No.: 20-CR-577 (JMA)