

## Former ICE informant says he helped convict 50

By Diana Washington Valdez / El Paso Times  
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EL PASO -- A former ICE informant who faces deportation was a law enforcement officer in Mexico who quit his job to work in the drug trade.

As Guillermo Eduardo "Lalo" Ramirez Peyro described it in federal documents, life in the Juárez drug cartel consisted of dirty cops smuggling drugs, sudden kidnappings, double-crossings, acts of revenge and gruesome murders.

Ramirez, a former Mexican federal highway police officer, was a DEA informant until he was busted in New Mexico, allegedly while bringing drugs across the border.

The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an agency that started in 2003, began to use him as an informant. Ramirez alleges his work led to the successful U.S. prosecutions of 50 people, including Heriberto Santillan Tabares (known in Mexico as Humberto Santillan Tabares), a high-ranking cartel member. ICE officials won't say how many cases Ramirez helped solve.

During former U.S. Attorney Johnny Sutton's tenure, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas moved Santillan's 2005 trial to San Antonio. Santillan agreed to plead guilty to drug-trafficking charges and was not charged for any of the slayings he allegedly ordered in Juárez. He was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

According to government indictments, Ramirez gave U.S. agencies a wealth of information about the Carrillo Fuentes drug organization.

After leaving the highway department, documents said, he worked with Colombian drug dealers, helping to fill orders for drugs destined for Juárez, Mexicali, Tijuana, Culiacan and Guadalajara. Later, he worked under Santillan for the Carrillo Fuentes cartel. Along the way, documents show, he met Arturo "Chaky" Hernandez, a notorious enforcer for the Juárez drug cartel, who is serving a prison term in Mexico.

Ramirez said Rafael Muñoz Talavera had recruited people from the state of Coahuila state to help him topple the Carrillo Fuenteses, who were from Sinaloa state.

Muñoz, whom the DEA considers an original founder of the Juárez drug cartel, was wanted by U.S. authorities in connection with the seizure of 20 tons of cocaine found in 1989 in a Los Angeles-area warehouse. He was found dead in Juárez in 1998. Ramirez said around this time, the Carrillo Fuentes organization ordered the kidnappings of about 70 people in and around Juárez.

Brothers Amado and Vicente Carrillo Fuentes took over the Juárez smuggling corridor in 1993, after Rafael Aguilar Guajardo was murdered in Cancun.

Before his death, Aguilar, a Juárez native and federal police commander, was the Juárez cartel kingpin. He lived in a house with his family in West El Paso.

The informant said he also met Miguel Loya Gallegos, a Chihuahua state police commander in Juárez, who trafficked drugs and carried out hits for the cartel, according to a federal government document.

In the document, Ramirez mentioned a "big brother" guesthouse in Juárez that cartel leaders used for meetings to settle accounts and plan kidnappings and murders. The address was omitted. During his involvement with Santillan and Loya, Ramirez said he was sent to a house in Juárez where a lawyer named Fernando Reyes Aguado was to be killed so that Loya could steal drugs from him.

The lawyer "began to struggle with the (state) judicial police, and they asked me to help them get him to the floor," Ramirez said. "They tried to choke him (with) an extension cord, but this broke and I gave them a plastic bag and they put it on his head and suffocated him.

"I asked the judicial police if they were sure Fernando was dead, upon which (one of the policemen) took a ... shovel and hit him many times on the head until he was sure that he was dead."

Ramirez, who was wearing a wire and recorded the 2003 murder for ICE, received \$2,000 from Santillan as payment for him and others to bury the bodies. Eleven more murders occurred during his ICE mission related to Santillan, Loya and the Juárez house. He also received \$220,000 from the U.S. government for his services as an informant, according to documents.

U.S. authorities indicted other alleged co-conspirators of Santillan, including Ismael Bueno, 52, of Hereford, Texas; Jesus Rodriguez Rodriguez, 37, of Durango, Mexico; and Homero Nevarez Montoya, 24, of Chicago, who are in U.S. custody.

Loya was indicted in absentia, along with Edmundo Castillo Flores, 51, of Torreon, Mexico; Jesus "Chato" Delgado, 41, of El Paso; Chris Sepulveda, 24, of El Paso; Arturo Bustillos, 39, of Horizon City; Miguel Loya Gallegos, 35, of Juárez; and three men only identified as "Julio," "Ramon" and "Manuel Lujan."

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