



Jose Luis Castro and Raul Martinez Pleaded Guilty in Laredo Federal Court to Participating in a Scheme to Recruit Straw-Purchasers to Buy Firearms

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The U.S. Attorney's Office Southern District of Texas on August 17, 2011 released the following:

"Firearm Straw Purchaser Recruiters Plead Guilty

LAREDO, Texas – Jose Luis Castro, 39 of Austin, Texas, and Raul Martinez, 34 of Laredo, Texas, have pleaded guilty to participating in a scheme to recruit straw-purchasers to buy firearms, particularly Colt "El Grito" .38 caliber super pistols, United States Attorney José Angel Moreno announced today.

Castro and Martinez pleaded guilty on Tuesday, Aug. 16, 2011, before U.S. Magistrate Judge Scott Hacker admitting that between July 2007 and December 2008, each of them recruited several persons to provide their personal information and to fill out and sign ATF Form 4473s – the official firearms transaction record for intrastate, over the counter firearm transactions. Those persons – the straw-purchasers – included Laredo residents Adrian Bustos, 26, Mario Magana, 25, Homero Garcia III, Manuel Rangel, 40, Hector Lozano III, 25, and Jose Angel Monsivais, 38. By signing the ATF Form 4473, these straw purchasers certified they were the actual buyer of the firearms when in fact they knew they were

not. These six defendants pleaded guilty last month to providing false statements in firearm transactions. Abel R. Arambula, a formerly federally licensed firearms dealer, failed to keep proper records of these sales and also pleaded guilty to that offense last month admitting that in October 2007, while doing business as Abel's Speciality Guns in San Ygnacio, Texas, he listed the name of a straw purchaser on the records pertaining to the sale of a Colt "El Grito" pistol to Castro.

With the convictions of Castro and Martinez, all of the defendants arrested and charged as a result of the indictment returned in June 2011 have been convicted and are pending sentencing later this year on a date to be set by U.S. Senior District Judge George P. Kazen.

This scheme involved approximately 40 firearms purchased through Abel's Specialty Guns located in San Ygnacio, Texas. Many transactions took place at the house of Martinez. The signature firearm of the scheme was the Colt "El Grito" .38 caliber super pistol, a pistol which has gold engravings and is nickel-plated and commemorates Mexico's independence from Spain on Sept. 16, 1810. It is believed several of these firearms were headed to Mexico.

The charges and the convictions of these two defendants and the others are the result of an investigation conducted by

special agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Acting upon a tip, ATF agents obtained the firearm transaction records, interviewed the alleged buyers who later admitted their roles as straw purchasers and ultimately lead to the charges in this case.

A conviction for conspiracy to make false statements on official firearms transaction records as well as making the false statement or the failure of a federal firearms licensee to maintain proper records carries a maximum punishment of five years incarceration and a \$250,000 fine.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Elizabeth Rabe and Jose Homero Ramirez."

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Douglas McNabb and other members of the U.S. law firm practice and write extensively on matters involving Federal Criminal Defense, INTERPOL Red Notice Removal, International Extradition and OFAC SDN List Removal.

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