



THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE

United States Attorney's Office
District of Oregon

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**DEA Investigations Result in Three Southern Oregon Drug Traffickers
Pleading Guilty in Federal Court**

Defendants include the head of a Klamath Falls drug trafficking organization

MEDFORD, Ore.—The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon announced today that three southern Oregon drug traffickers, including the head of a Klamath Falls, Oregon, drug trafficking organization, have pleaded guilty in federal court following investigations by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) Medford resident office.

Juan Jessie Martinez-Gil, 59, a former resident of Reno, Nevada, pleaded guilty today to conspiring to distribute and possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine and fentanyl. Candice Nadine McKee, 31, a distributor in Martinez-Gil's network and resident of Lakeview, Oregon, pleaded guilty Monday to possessing with intent to distribute fentanyl.

Also on Monday, in a separate criminal case, Jessie Cole Merkel, 31, of Redding, California, pleaded guilty to one count of distributing fentanyl.

U.S. v. Martinez-Gil et al.

According to court documents, between August 2019 and September 2021, Martinez-Gil, the head of a Klamath Falls area drug trafficking organization, conspired with various associates, including McKee, to possess and distribute large quantities of methamphetamine and fentanyl, in the form of counterfeit Oxycodone pills, in and around Klamath Falls. A coordinated law enforcement operation conducted in September 2021 led to the arrests Martinez-Gil and several of his co-conspirators. Federal search warrants were executed on five locations and two vehicles. Over the course of the investigation, DEA special agents, working with other southern Oregon law enforcement agencies, seized approximately 17 pounds of methamphetamine and 700 counterfeit Oxycodone pills.

Martinez-Gil will be sentenced on February 22, 2024, by U.S. District Court Judge Michael J. McShane. He faces a maximum sentence of life in prison with a 10-year mandatory minimum sentence. McKee will be sentenced the same day and faces a maximum sentence of 25 years in prison.

U.S. v. Merkel

According to court documents, between February and April 2022, Merkel, a known northern California drug dealer responsible for trafficking quantities of fentanyl from California to

Oregon, sold fentanyl to undercover law enforcement officers on two separate occasions. On April 14, 2022, Merkel was arrested while traveling from California to Oregon.

Merkel will be sentenced on February 22, 2024, by Judge McShane. He faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison, a \$1 million fine, and three years' supervised release.

Martinez-Gil et al. was investigated by the DEA Medford Resident Office with assistance from the Basin Interagency Narcotics Enforcement Team (BINET), a Klamath Falls area narcotics task force comprised of Oregon State Police, the Klamath Falls Police Department, and Oregon National Guard.

Merkel was investigated by the DEA Medford Resident Office with assistance from Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), Oregon State Police, and the Central Point Police Department.

Both cases were prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon.

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