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For Immediate Release

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# Violent Cartel Associates Sentenced to Life in Prison for Kidnapping for Ransom

## *Three Defendants Indicted by Grand Jury to Serve Lengthy Terms*

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) announced today that three defendants, who were previously indicted by a grand jury, were sentenced to lengthy prison sentences for their violent acts on behalf of a Mexican drug cartel. Defendants Victor Medrano, 44, and Eliceo Flores, 36 were sentenced to life in state prison without parole and defendant Emily Gonzalez, 33, was sentenced to 24 years, eight months in custody. A fourth indicted defendant, 32-year-old Julie Soto, is scheduled for trial in December.

All four defendants were indicted by a grand jury for their roles in the kidnappings of two women, who allegedly stole from the Sinaloa Cartel. The two men were also indicted for brutally assaulting the two women. Flores, Medrano, and Soto were further indicted for a variety of conspiracies to sell large amounts of fentanyl, meth, heroin, and ghost guns on behalf of the cartel. Additionally, Flores and Medrano were indicted for conspiracies to commit a separate kidnapping, robbery, possession of numerous stolen vehicles, and for passing over \$10,000 in fraudulent checks.

“Drug cartels are a serious and violent threat to our community and their criminal networks should not and will not be allowed to operate in our county,” DA Stephan said. “Let this case be an example of the type of justice that will be brought forth by our dedicated gang prosecutors who work with our law enforcement partners and who risk their lives to deliver justice on behalf of victims to protect the community.”

Medrano and Flores each pleaded guilty on June 5 to two counts of kidnapping for ransom causing bodily harm. Gonzalez pleaded guilty to two counts of kidnapping and carjacking. Both Flores and Gonzalez also admitted to having a serious felony strike prior.

The grand jury indictment alleges that Soto, Medrano, and Flores were part of a large-scale drug and gun importation scheme, with Medrano referring to Soto as “the big boss” and “the one that takes care of most SD.” The indictment references messages from the group about pounds of methamphetamine, heroin, and fentanyl powder for sale. Additional messages discuss the illicit sale of AR-15 assault rifles and ghost handguns. The indictment also describes efforts by Medrano and Flores to kidnap, attempt to kidnap, or “take out” several different victims.

The grand jury alleged that on May 2, 2022, Soto was actively looking for one of two women, who Soto suspected had stolen a load of drugs. Soto allegedly contacted Medrano about retrieving the stolen items. Medrano, Flores, and Gonzalez drove to the victims' El Cajon residence, where the two men forcibly entered and ordered the victims to leave at gunpoint. The trio took the victims to a house in Lemon Grove and held them for ransom before transporting the women to Medrano's Chula Vista home.

Once inside Medrano's home, the indictment alleges Medrano, Flores, and Gonzalez drugged the victims, threatened the victims with torture, and then brutally assaulted the women.

In a statement to the court, one of the victims described the women as "survivors of an unimaginable ordeal." She described the anxiety and PTSD she has endured since this "humiliating" incident and remarked at how "truly scary [it is] to know that people with these characteristics and mindsets live among us." Ultimately, she addressed the male defendants, saying that even though they only pleaded guilty to the aggravated kidnapping charges, she "rest[s] just fine because God knows what you did and there's no way around that one. Now the question of the day: was it worth it? Was the money that was promised you worth the rest of your life? I don't believe in reincarnation, but if that does happen, hopefully you don't decide to be a puppet in that life as you were in this one."

Deputy District Attorney Drew Garrison prosecuted this case.

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*About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office*

*The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.*