

MS-13 member, Salvadoran national, sentenced for RICO Conspiracy, murder of Massachusetts teen

"An MS-13 member was sentenced yesterday in federal court in Boston for RICO conspiracy and for his participation in the July 2018 murder of a teenage boy who was stabbed at least 32 times in a public park in Lynn.

Eliseo Vaquerano Canas, a/k/a "Peligroso," 22, a Salvadorian national, was sentenced by U.S. Senior District Court Judge Mark L. Wolf to 43 years in prison and five years of supervised release. Vaquerano will be subject to deportation proceedings upon completion of his sentence. In February 2021, Vaquerano pleaded guilty to conspiracy to conduct enterprise affairs through a pattern of racketeering activity, also known as RICO conspiracy, on behalf of the MS-13 gang. As part of his racketeering activity, Vaquerano participated in the 2018 murder of a teenager, who was murdered with extreme atrocity and cruelty, and with deliberate premeditation, in violation of Massachusetts law.

MS-13, or La Mara Salvatrucha, is a transnational street gang operating in Massachusetts and numerous other states, as well as countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. MS-13 gang members often commit acts of extreme violence against suspected rivals, those suspected of cooperating with law enforcement, and others who the gang views as a threat. In recent years, dozens of MS-13 members have been convicted of RICO conspiracy and other serious felonies in the District of Massachusetts.

MS-13 is organized into "cliques" or branches operating in

local territories. Vaquerano belonged to the "Sykos Locos Salvatrucha" clique of MS-13, which operated in the cities of Lynn, Chelsea, and other parts of Massachusetts. MS-13 has various ranks, with elevation to "homeboy" status generally requiring the commission of a significant act of violence. Evidence showed that Vaquerano had achieved homeboy status in MS-13 even prior to the July 2018 murder. Evidence also showed that Vaquerano helped recruit young members on behalf of the gang, including at Chelsea High School.

In November 2018, Vaquerano and five other MS-13 Sykos clique members were indicted following an investigation into the murder of a teenage boy, whose body found in a park in Lynn on Aug. 2, 2018. The six defendants in this case included five participants in the murder, as well as one longstanding member of the Sykos clique. In a related case, the government charged a juvenile co-conspirator who was the sixth person involved in the murder.

The evidence in this case, which included a recording of one of Vaquerano's co-defendants describing the murder in graphic detail, revealed that Vaquerano Canas and five other MS-13 gang members murdered the victim based on their mistaken belief that he may have been assisting law enforcement.

On July 30, 2018, the six gang members lured the victim to a public park. At least four of the attackers, including Vaquerano, were armed with knives. The group pretended to be friendly with the unsuspecting victim and took him to a wooded area of the park where they surrounded the victim and repeatedly stabbed him to death. At least four of the six assailants took part in stabbing the victim. Vaquerano had an especially active role in the brutal attack. Evidence showed that as the victim was being attacked, he called out to Vaquerano for help, believing that Vaquerano was his friend. Instead, Vaquerano repeatedly stabbed and hacked at the victim with a large knife. Vaquerano attacked the victim with such force that parts of his large knife shattered, and pieces of

the blade were embedded into the victim's skull.

After killing the victim, the gang members left his body in the wooded area of the public park where it was discovered days later, on Aug. 2, 2018. An autopsy revealed that the victim suffered at least 32 distinct sharp force trauma wounds consistent with being stabbed repeatedly, along with multiple blunt force injuries.

All six defendants indicted in this case, along with the juvenile charged in the related case, have pleaded guilty. Vaquerano is the fifth defendant to be sentenced in the case. On Feb. 14, 2022, Erick Lopez Flores, a/k/a "Mayimbu," was sentenced to 40 years in prison. On Feb. 15, 2022, Jonathan Tercero Yanes, a/k/a "Desalmado," was sentenced to 33 years in prison. On Feb. 16, 2022, Henri Salvador Gutierrez, a/k/a "Perverso," was sentenced to life in prison. On Feb. 18, 2022, Djavier Duggins, a/k/a "Haze," was sentenced to 15 years in prison. A sentencing hearing for the remaining co-defendant, Marlos Reyes a/k/a "Silencio," has not yet been scheduled by the Court.

First Assistant United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy; Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division; Matthew B. Millhollin, Special Agent in Charge of Homeland Security Investigations in Boston; Colonel Christopher Mason, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police; Essex County District Attorney Jonathan W. Blodgett; Suffolk County District Attorney Kevin Hayden; Acting Boston Police Commissioner Gregory Long; and Lynn Police Chief Christopher Reddy made the announcement. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kunal Pasricha, Kaitlin O'Donnell, and Philip Mallard of the Criminal Division prosecuted the case.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that

threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.” -Department of Justice, District of Massachusetts.