

Treasury Targets Cartel-Enabled Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Operations

Today, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) is sanctioning five Mexican individuals associated with the Gulf Cartel, one of Mexico's most dangerous criminal organizations. Those designated today are tied to the Gulf Cartel's involvement in criminal activities associated with illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, human smuggling, and narcotics trafficking in the Gulf of Mexico.

HARMFUL IMPACTS OF IUU FISHING

The U.S. Department of the Treasury is a member of the U.S. Interagency Working Group on IUU Fishing, which was established by the Maritime Securities and Fisheries Enforcement (SAFE) Act and is the primary mechanism for coordination of counter-IUU fishing actions across the U.S. government. On June 27, 2022, President Biden issued the [National Security Memorandum on Combating Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing and Associated Labor Abuses](#), which notes that IUU fishing and related harmful fishing practices are among the greatest threats to ocean health and are significant causes of global overfishing, contributing to the collapse or decline of fisheries that are critical to the economic growth, food systems, and ecosystems of numerous countries around the world.

CRIMINAL OPERATIONS OF MEXICO'S GULF CARTEL

The Gulf Cartel is a long-standing, powerful drug trafficking organization that operates throughout Tamaulipas State, Mexico. The Gulf Cartel has moved arms, drugs, and migrants into the United States, and was responsible for the kidnapping and murder of American citizens in March 2023.

EXPOSING THE GULF CARTEL'S ILLICIT LANCHAS OPERATIONS

The Gulf Cartel engages in the illicit trade of red snapper and shark species through "lancha" operations based out of Playa Bagdad, also known as Playa Costa Azul, a beach located several miles south of the U.S. border. Lanchas are light, fast-moving boats utilized by Mexican fishermen that are generally between 20 to 30 feet long. Apart from their use for IUU fishing in U.S. waters, lanchas are also used to move illicit drugs and migrants into the United States.

Ismael Guerra Salinas (a.k.a. Mayelo) and his brother **Omar Guerra Salinas** (a.k.a. Samorano) are the Gulf Cartel members in charge of Playa Bagdad. Beyond overseeing IUU fishing, Mayelo and Samorano manage drug trafficking operations on Playa Bagdad. Mayelo has also facilitated human smuggling conducted via these lanchas, in which the individuals are kept hidden for transport across the Rio Grande River. In addition, **Francisco Javier Sierra Angulo** (a.k.a. El Borrado) currently leads the Gulf Cartel in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico. El Borrado was previously in charge of the Valle Hermoso Plaza for the Gulf Cartel.

Raul Decuir Garcia (a.k.a. La Burra) and **Ildelfonso Carrillo Sapien** (a.k.a. El Chivo) are lancha camp owners who oversee and enable lancha fishermen crossing into U.S. waters for or on behalf of the Gulf Cartel.

As a result of today's action, all property and interests in property of the designated persons described above that are in the United States or in the possession or control of U.S. persons are blocked and must be reported to OFAC. In addition, any entities that are owned, directly or indirectly, individually or in the aggregate, 50 percent or more by one or more blocked persons are also blocked. Unless authorized by a general or specific license issued by OFAC, or exempt, OFAC's regulations generally prohibit all transactions by U.S. persons or within (or transiting) the United States that involve any property or interests in property of designated or otherwise blocked persons.

Dated 26th November, 2024

