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Owner of Money Service Business Unlawfully Residing in the United States Sentenced for Conspiring to Launder Drug Proceeds

PORTLAND, Ore.— A Guatemalan national unlawfully residing in the United States was sentenced to federal prison today for laundering money for drug traffickers in the Portland metropolitan area through her money service business La Popular.

Brenda Lili Barrera Orantes, 40, was sentenced to 41 months in federal prison and three years of supervised release.

According to court documents, Barrera Orantes owned and operated La Popular stores in Hillsboro, Beaverton, Woodburn, Odell, and Canby, Oregon, as well as in Vancouver, Washington. From August through November 2024, La Popular stores sent over \$4.2 million dollars through wire transfers to places in Mexico associated with drug trafficking. During this same time period, Barrera Orantes and other co-conspirators accepted \$49,500 in cash that was represented as drug proceeds and laundered it through La Popular stores.

Barrera Orantes accepted cash she believed was generated from drug dealing, and in exchange for a 10% commission, conducted wire transactions using techniques that made the laundered funds harder to detect, including using false sender information, structuring wire transfers into smaller amounts, and using different La Popular stores to help conceal the drug proceeds.

On April 16, 2025, investigators executed federal search warrants at Barrera Orantes' Beaverton residence and three La Popular stores in Beaverton, Hillsboro, and Vancouver and arrested Barrera Orantes. During the warrants, agents seized more than \$300,000 in cash, a 2021 Cadillac Escalade, jewelry, and high-end clothing.

On May 13, 2025, a federal grand jury in Portland returned a 23-count indictment charging Barrera Orantes with money laundering and conspiracy, failure to file a currency transaction report, and failure to file a suspicious activity report.

On October 24, 2025, Barrera Orantes pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to launder monetary instruments. She also agreed to forfeit her Beaverton residence and all the seized cash and other property involved in her money laundering offense.

This case was investigated by the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation, Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Westside Interagency Narcotics Team. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christopher L. Cardani and Julia Jarrett prosecuted the case.

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