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Contact: PAO

Public Affairs Officer

USAWAE.Media@usdoj.gov

Tri-Cities Man Found Guilty of Large-Scale Fentanyl Trafficking

Richland, Washington – First Assistant United States Attorney Pete Serrano announced that on August 13, 2026, a jury found David Mendoza Ayala, 30, guilty of Possession with Intent to Distribute 400 Grams or More of Fentanyl. United States District Judge Mary K. Dimke presided over the trial and set sentencing for November 12, 2026. Mendoza Ayala faces a sentence of at least 10 years, and up to life, in prison followed by no less than 5 years, and up to life of supervised release.

According to court documents Mendoza Ayala was a long-standing investigative target of the Drug Enforcement Administration and Tri-Cities Metro Drug Task Force. He had been suspected of being involved in large-scale drug trafficking for many years. Mendoza-Ayala learned that law enforcement was closing in and as a result, went into hiding. Although hiding, Mendoza Ayala continued his drug trafficking, utilizing other people's names and addresses to avoid detection. Following months of tireless surveillance and evidence collection, investigators obtained search warrants for Mendoza Ayala's apartment, two garage units, multiple luxury vehicles, and four storage units. During the searches, investigators located in excess of 50,000 fentanyl pills, substantial amounts of methamphetamine and cocaine, approximately \$10,000 in drug cash proceeds, and over a dozen firearms to include AR style rifles. All told, investigators seized 13 vehicles associated with the Defendant and his illicit conduct.

During trial, evidence was also presented that inside Mendoza Ayala's apartment, two small children were located – mere feet away from fentanyl laced pills scattered throughout the carpet and apartment.



“For years, David Mendoza Ayala, engaged in large scale drug trafficking, pushing poison into our community,” stated Serrano. “While Mendoza Ayala was able to escape consequences by hiding and fleeing from law enforcement, this case serves as proof that my office, along with our partners in federal and local law enforcement, never give up. Through their tireless efforts and investigation, Mendoza Ayala was arrested and a jury convicted him for his conduct. Those who, like this Defendant, make a profit off the lives our citizens, will be tirelessly pursued and brought to justice.”

“Mr. Mendoza Ayala showed a complete disregard for human life by having deadly fentanyl pills in the apartment, some of which were scattered on the carpet, within reach of two young children,” said Robert A. Saccone, Special Agent in Charge, DEA Seattle Field Division. “Along with more than 50,000 fentanyl pills, investigators seized luxury vehicles, and more than a dozen firearms. Through Fentanyl Free America, DEA is relentlessly targeting those who put our communities at risk, disrupting the fentanyl supply chain, and holding traffickers accountable.”

“This case is a great example of why the partnership between the DEA, and the Tri-City Metro Drug Task Force is so important. Teamwork has been a pillar of success for Detectives working diligently to combat those attempting to traffic drugs to our region,” added Isaac Merkl, the Tri-City Metro Drug Task Force Commander.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Agency’s Tri-Cities Resident Office and the Tri-Cities Metro Drug Task Force. This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Brandon Pang.

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