

## News Release

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### **Owner of Numero Uno Markets Convicted of Federal Racketeering Charges After Jury Finds He Solicited Murder, Bribed Public Official**

**APR 21** -- The owner of the Los Angeles-based Numero Uno supermarket chain was convicted today of participating in a racketeering enterprise that was involved in a host of illegal activities, including solicitation of murder, bribery of a public official, harboring illegal aliens and tax violations.

George Torres, 52, an Arcadia resident who has been in custody since he was arrested after being indicted two years ago, was found guilty of 55 felony counts, including racketeering, "honest services" mail fraud and wire fraud, conspiring to harbor illegal aliens, and a host of tax charges. The jury determined that Torres solicited the February 1994 murder of a gang member who demanded a "tax" from a Numero Uno Market. A federal court jury that deliberated for four days acquitted Torres of one count of wire fraud.

Although United States District Judge Stephen V. Wilson has not yet scheduled a sentencing date, Torres faces a sentence of up to life in federal prison as a result of today's convictions. The evidence presented at trial showed that Torres operated his business, Numero Uno Markets, as a corrupt organization for nearly three decades, and that he used the assistance of a public officials to attempt to obtain valuable licenses and permits for Torres' businesses in return for a stream of benefits that included lavish gifts. Torres, whose empire included 11 supermarkets in the greater Los Angeles area, used the markets to facilitate fraud and tax violations. The United States Marshals Service has seized the Numero Uno supermarkets and other assets owned by Torres. The government is seeking to forfeit the assets.

The case against Torres is the result of an investigation by HIDTA, the High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force. The investigation involved the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; IRS-Criminal Investigation; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Alcohol, Firearms and Explosives; the Los Angeles Police Department; the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department; the Baldwin Park Police Department; the Azusa Police Department; the Bell Police Department; the Bell Gardens Police Department; the United States Marshals Service; and the California Department of Justice's Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement.

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