

Mexico seizes \$205.6M from luxury house

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The \$205.6 million seized from a luxury Mexico City house was the largest drug cash seizure "the world has ever seen" and resulted from U.S.-Mexico cooperation, the head of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration said Monday.

DEA chief Karen Tandy said in statement that U.S anti-drug agents working with Mexican police in an "historic partnership" against methamphetamine producers led to Thursday's seizure.

The money found hidden inside walls, suitcases and closets in one of Mexico City's wealthiest neighborhoods came from the profits of methamphetamines sold in the United States, she said.

"This is like law enforcement hitting the ultimate jackpot. But luck had nothing to do with this windfall," Tandy said, calling it "the largest single drug-cash seizure the world has ever seen."

Mexican federal agents also seized eight luxury vehicles, seven weapons and a pill-making machine during the raid in Lomas de Chapultepec, a neighborhood of walled compounds that is home to ambassadors and business magnates. Seven people were arrested and were ordered Monday to be held for three months while the investigation continues.

In addition to the U.S. money, officials found 200,000 euros and 157,500 pesos, which totals about \$280,000.

Mexican Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora said the money was connected to one of the hemisphere's largest networks for trafficking pseudoephedrine, the main ingredient in methamphetamines. He said the ring had been operating since 2004 and was run by a native of China who had gained Mexican citizenship.

The alleged gang leader is in hiding, possibly outside of the country, Mora said.

Tandy said the operation should reduce the supply of methamphetamines to the United States. At least 80 percent of meth consumed in the U.S. is trafficked by Mexican gangs, she said.

Mexican officials say the bust is part of nationwide crackdown on drugs and crime led by President Felipe Calderon, who came to power in December on a law and order platform. Since January, Calderon has sent more than 24,000 police and soldiers to areas ravaged by drug-related violence and extradited four alleged drug kingpins to the United States.

