

Voodoo Priest's Prophecies Spark 'Operation Hoodoo Voodoo'

A five-month investigation ended last week in Florida with the arrest of more than two dozen suspects—one a Voodoo priest—in a methamphetamine drug ring.

Authorities determined that 25 suspects were involved in trafficking the drug throughout Florida's Lake, Orange, Osceola, Polk and Seminole Counties, according to a statement from the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

Police began investigating the operation, known as "Hoodoo Voodoo," in October. Investigators have identified Javier Flores, aka "El Don," as the organization's source of methamphetamine supply. Flores, who lives in Southern California, is still at large.

Flores allegedly managed the large-scale drug shipments to Lakeland, Fla., Atlanta and Las Vegas through Southern California and Mexico. Detectives in February intercepted a \$200,170 cash delivery meant to pay for methamphetamine from a courier.

Flores and Ma-Concepcion Lopez then reportedly "consulted a Voodoo priest who would provide predictions, prophecies and readings regarding the organization's decisions and welfare," the Polk County Sheriff's Office statement said.

"They wanted to know if it was OK to continue," sheriff's spokeswoman Donna Woods told the *Orlando Sentinel*. "The priest advised them everything's OK. Just lay low for a couple of weeks. It's not the police. It's someone inside the organization."

Lopez was released from prison in 2009 after serving three years for a prior conviction of conspiracy to traffic methamphetamine, was deported to Mexico and then returned illegally.

The priest, who has not been identified, served as a spiritual adviser to both leaders and other lower-level operatives, the police said.

Investigators intercepted 44 pounds of methamphetamine worth \$2 million on Tuesday at Love's Truck Stop in Polk City, Fla.

According to the *Sentinel*, the ring "was extremely well-armed with about 100 firearms including AR-15 assault rifles, an AK-47 pistol with a drum magazine, a grenade launcher, bulletproof body armor and thousands of rounds of ammunition."

Of the 25 suspects arrested, 11 are currently receiving federal/public assistance. Two children, ages 1 and 3, were removed from an unidentified residence and placed in state custody.