

44 indicted in suspected heroin smuggling case

by Greg Moran

SAN DIEGO - Federal prosecutors announced on Wednesday the indictment of 44 people in a sprawling, international heroin smuggling network that used suitcases and baby blankets to conceal huge quantities of drugs.

The investigation also netted \$1 million in seized counterfeit money. Officials said the drugs were also smuggled in the linings of pants, jackets, and other clothes.

All the contraband originated in Colombia and made its way up through Central America and Mexico. It entered the U.S. primarily via Calexico. Then it was transported to San Diego, Phoenix and Las Vegas for eventual distribution in New York and New Jersey.

A large multi-agency task force worked on the case and seized 350 kilograms of heroin valued at \$35 million, as well as large amounts of cocaine and methamphetamine, U.S. Attorney Karen Hewitt said at a news conference.

Seven people who were indicted remain at large.

Extradition procedures for 18 people arrested in Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico and the Dominican Republic have been initiated.

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