

Another suspect arrested in Ecstasy drug case

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An alleged Ecstasy drug laboratory in Escondido may have links to India as well as Kosovo, authorities said Thursday as they announced the arrest of the 22nd of 24 suspects in the case.

Agents arrested Miguel Chavez, 21, at his Perris home Wednesday, said Assistant U.S. Attorney Todd Robinson. He said Chavez allegedly received chemical shipments for the unusual, large lab, which was broken up on Oct. 18 by drug agents.

The investigation has been extensive. Possible links to organized crime and Kosovo drug-trafficking have been explored in bail hearings for one lab suspect from Del Mar.

"The Drug Enforcement Administration has made the investigation a top priority," Robinson said Thursday. "There were some chemicals that were being ordered from India."

As of Thursday, two of 24 initial suspects were still at large. The investigation also netted federal racketeering fugitive John Galanis, 58, a former Del Mar resident discovered in Mexico.

He hasn't been linked to the lab but his two sons -- Derek Meyer Galanis, 29, of Del Mar, and Jason Woodruff Galanis, 31, of Los Angeles -- were arrested in connection with the case.



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Robinson said Jason Galanis' alleged involvement in the sophisticated lab was "very minimal." He was released on fully secured bail of \$100,000 a week ago.

However, Derek Galanis is among those accused of setting up the lab and the Ecstasy cooking process, Robinson said. Derek Galanis remained in custody.

At a bail hearing Wednesday, Robinson asked a judge to consider taped phone conversations allegedly linking Derek Galanis to the son of a suspected mobster and a Kosovo rebel general.

Derek Galanis was taped talking to Tommy Gambino, son of convicted drug trafficker Rosario Gambino, Robinson said Thursday. He said the Ecstasy lab ring was trying to get financing from the Gambino family.

Robinson said the alleged criminality of the link is "tenuous," noting that while investigators believe Tony Gambino is part of the Gambino crime family there are no charges against him and no probable cause to believe he committed any offenses in the lab case, said Robinson.

Describing the government in Kosovo as “confused,” Michael Pancer, Derek Galanis’ lawyer, said Tommy and Rosario Gambino are a different family than the organized crime one in New York.

“There were allegations made that I think we can in time rebut,” Pancer said. “Tommy Gambino has never done anything illegal in his life.”

All the laboratory defendants were charged with conspiracy to manufacture and distribute Ecstasy. Conviction could mean up to 30 years in federal prison.

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