

2 border agents put on leave during probe

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Two Border Patrol agents have been placed on administrative leave while under investigation, authorities said yesterday.

The investigation parallels another one into what authorities said was an international drug trafficking organization run by an Encinitas gang member.

The agents under investigation weren't working directly with the people arrested Monday, a sheriff's lieutenant said.

"They knew each other," said Lt. Derek Clark, head of the North County gang unit that helped break up the drug ring Monday with the arrest of 28 people.

Dora Doyle, a Border Patrol spokeswoman in San Diego, confirmed the agents aren't on active duty while they are investigated.

"It would be inappropriate at this time for the Border Patrol to comment about any aspect so as not to compromise the integrity of the investigation," she said, reading from a prepared statement and declining to answer questions. "We are unaware of any arrests."

Officers of the union that represents area Border Patrol agents said they were aware of the investigation.

"If what they are saying is true, we don't want anyone to think the union is going to support these agents," said Chris Bauder, president of Local 1613 of the National Border Patrol Council.

"The union wants this investigation to be as thorough as possible so that if there are any bad agents, they can be weeded out now."

Bauder would not comment further on the two individuals, saying he didn't want to hinder the investigation.

Such cases are investigated by the Office of Inspector General within the Department of Homeland Security.

A call to the agency's office in San Diego was directed to Washington D.C., where spokeswoman Tamara Faulkner said: "I can neither confirm nor deny. That's the policy."

Authorities said the drug ring busted Monday allegedly was run by a documented gang member, Juan Rodriguez, 30, of Encinitas.

In court papers, they said he headed an organization that obtained cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana from Mexico and San Diego County and distributed it locally and across the country, from Florida to Hawaii.

A man indicted in that case was arrested yesterday in Hawaii as he was picking up a package mailed from Carlsbad, authorities said. Two other packages linked to him contained three kilos of cocaine, they said.

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