

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024033632710 The US Treasury has added an alleged Sinaloa Cartel member linked to drug lord Juan Jose "El Azul" Esparragoza Moreno to its Kingpin List, as the authorities increase the pressure on Mexico's leading criminal organization following the arrest of Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman. According to the treasury, Hugo Cuellar Hurtado, his family and ten of his businesses are involved in drug trafficking for Esparragoza Moreno who, together with Chapo and Ismael Zambada Garcia, alias "El Mayo," is one of the three principal leaders of the Sinaloa Cartel. Cuellar, who has joint Colombian and Mexican nationality, began his career in drug trafficking moving cocaine to the United States through Mexico for Pablo Escobar's Medellin Cartel. After moving part time to Mexico in the late 1990s, he began working for the Sinaloa Cartel. The treasury identified six businesses in Colombia and four in Mexico, including several pawn shops, a hotel and an ostrich farm, as fronts for his drug trafficking activities. It also added a further six people to the list involved in Cuellar's activities, five of them family members. In a statement the Treasury said the move was the "next step" in taking on the Sinaloa Cartel following the arrest of Chapo. Azul has been on the Treasury's "Kingpin List" since 2003, while the Sinaloa Cartel organization was placed on the list in 2009. InSight Crime Analysis With the Sinaloa Cartel looking to regroup following the capture of Chapo, the US and Mexican authorities will now be looking to capitalize on the moment to attack the group's remaining structures. SEE ALSO: Azul Profile To do this, they will not only have to target dismantling the organization left behind by Chapo, but also the networks managed by Azul and Mayo. While all three drug lords are considered leaders of the Sinaloa Cartel, in reality their organizations are overlapping and complementary, but distinct. In the months leading up to the capture of Chapo, authorities landed several blows against Mayo, to the extent that before the arrest it was widely thought Mayo was the primary target of operations. This latest move by the treasury suggests they also have Azul firmly in their sights.