

Name: Alert ID: TMML202403850975 A former Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) agent known for his lavish lifestyle was arrested Friday on charges of conspiring to launder money for the same Colombian drug cartel he was supposed to be investigating. Authorities arrested Jose Irizarry and his wife at their home near San Juan, Puerto Rico. Federal prosecutors say in a 19-count indictment that the 49-year-old used "his position and his special access to information" to launder millions in drug profits. They both posted \$10,000 bail and were released. "It's a black eye for the DEA to have one of its own engaged in such a high level of corruption," said Mike Vigil, the DEA's former chief of international operations. "He jeopardized investigations. He jeopardized other agents and he jeopardized informants." Irizarry had been a model agent after joining the DEA in Miami in 2009. He was entrusted with an undercover money-laundering operation using front companies, shell bank accounts and couriers. Irizarry resigned in January 2018 after being reassigned to Washington when his boss in Colombia became suspicious. ■ Previous reports by The Associated Press detailed his alleged wrongdoing last year. "His fingerprints are all over dozens of arrests and indictments," said David S. Weinstein, a former federal prosecutor in Miami. "It could have a ripple effect and cause courts to re-examine any case he was involved in." Authorities said Irizarry filed false reports and misled superiors while directing the DEA to wire funds intended for undercover operations to accounts in Spain and other countries. The accounts were either controlled by him or connected to his wife and co-conspirators, prosecutors said. The money funded a lavish lifestyle that included the purchase of a \$30,000 Tiffany diamond ring, a BMW, three Land Rovers and a \$767,000 home in Cartagena, as well as homes in south Florida and Puerto Rico, where the couple has been living. A red Lamborghini with the same vehicle ID named in the indictment belongs to Jenny Ambuila, who was arrested last year in Colombia along with her father, Omar Ambuila, a customs agent in the port of Buenaventura, a major transit point for cocaine and contraband goods used to conceal the proceeds of narcotics sales. Before her arrest, Ambuila shared photos and videos of herself on Facebook posing next to the red sports car, which is valued at more than \$300,000. ■ One of two unnamed co-conspirators in the indictment is Diego Martin, a relative of Irizarry's wife, The AP reported. Martin is considered one of the top money-laundering suspects in Colombia over the past decade, according to U.S. and Colombian officials. He was arrested in 1993 for allegedly hiding money for the Cali cartel in home appliances bound for Colombia. He was never charged and eluded prosecution ever since by leveraging relationships built over decades as an informant to multiple U.S. law enforcement agencies, the officials said. The indictment comes a week after another DEA agent was sentenced to four years in prison for smuggling drugs from Puerto Rico to New York. The Associated Press contributed to this report.