Guatemalan Drug Kingpin Sentenced in Manhattan Federal Court to 31 Years for Leading Massive, Armed Cocaine Conspiracy

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Scales of Justice

NEW YORK (RPRN) 04/19/10 — Guatemalan Drug Kingpin Sentenced in Manhattan Federal Court to 31 Years for Leading Massive, Armed Cocaine Conspiracy

-- JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") and PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York announced today that JORGE MARIO PAREDES-CORDOVA ("PAREDES"), designated by the United States Department of Justice as one of the world's most significant drug kingpins, was sentenced to 31 years in prison for leading an armed cocaine trafficking organization that imported ton-quantities of cocaine into the United States. PAREDES, was found guilty by a jury in November 2009, after a six-week trial before Manhattan Federal District Judge DEBORAH A. BATTS, on charges of cocaine importation conspiracy and cocaine distribution conspiracy.

DEA Special Agent-in-Charge JOHN P. GILBRIDE stated: "The sentencing of Jorge Mario Paredes-Cordova exemplifies the commitment of law enforcement's battle against drug trafficking organizations throughout the world. International, state, local, and federal law enforcement have successfully collaborated in order to put this drug kingpin in jail for 31 years as a result of his illegal cocaine trafficking organizations desire to supply the streets of America with cocaine. Today, Paredes-Cordova has been sentenced to reside 31 years behind bars for his criminal activities."

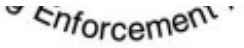
According to the evidence at trial, other publicly filed documents, and statements made at the sentencing proceeding:

PAREDES led a Guatemala-based organization responsible for receiving ton-quantity shipments of Colombian cocaine in Central America and Mexico, and importing it into the United States over the Southwest border. PAREDES and his organization conspired in this venture with other notorious Colombian and Mexican cocaine kingpins, including OSCAR ARRIOLA-MARQUEZ, OSCAR NAVA-VALENCIA, MANUEL FELIPE "HOOVER" SALAZAR-ESPINOSA, and DANIEL "LOCO" BARRERA, all of whom, like PAREDES, have been designated to the Consolidated Priority Organization Targets ("CPOTs") by the Department of Justice, a list of the most dangerous and prolific narcotics traffickers in the world. From 1998 through 2005,

PAREDES and his organization participated in the importation or attempted importation of thousands of kilograms of cocaine, over one and a half tons of which were seized in the United States and Central America by law enforcement authorities.

In addition to engaging in cocaine trafficking crimes, PAREDES' organization was heavily armed. Boat crews dispatched by PAREDES from Guatemala to receive cocaine shipments at sea carried AK-47 assault rifles, shotguns, and pistols. As a kingpin, PAREDES himself traveled with an armed contingent of bodyguards. PAREDES evaded capture for several years and protected his cocaine shipments from

seizure by bribing law enforcement authorities in Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras. He was eventually captured in Honduras in 2008 while living there under a false identity, and transferred to the United States for prosecution



Drug Enforcement Administration

U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "Jorge Mario Paredes-Cordova was once one of the worlds most notorious and dangerous drug kingpins. Today, he begins serving a 31-year sentence as just another inmate of the United States Bureau of Prisons. We are grateful to our partners at the DEA for their heroic efforts in bringing to justice this international drug lord."

Mr. BHARARA praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (which is comprised of agents and officers of the DEA, New York Police Department and New York State Police) which led the investigation, and thanked the DEA's Offices in Houston, Colorado Springs, Miami, Guatemala City, Panama City and Mexico City, and the DEA's Special Operations Division for their crucial roles in the investigation. Mr. BHARARA also thanked the United States Marshals Service, the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the United States Attorney's Offices in Houston, Miami and Colorado Springs, the United States Department of Justice's Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Section, the United Nations Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala ("CICIG"), and law enforcement authorities in Guatemala and Honduras for their assistance during the investigation and trial.

This case was prosecuted by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Trafficking Unit. ANIRUDH BANSAL, JOCELYN STRAUBER, and NICHOLAS LEWIN are in charge of the prosecution.

Media Contact Name: Erin Mulvey
Media E-mail: dea@govdelivery.com
Media Phone: 212 337-2906

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