



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
YUSILL SCRIBNER,
REBEKAH CARMICHAEL,
JANICE OH
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600**

**COCAINE CARTEL LEADER TO FACE
CHARGES IN THE UNITED STATES**

Acting Assistant Attorney General MATTHEW FRIEDRICH of the Criminal Division, Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") Acting Administrator MICHELLE LEONHART and U.S. Attorneys MICHAEL J. GARCIA of the Southern District of New York and BENTON J. CAMPBELL of the Eastern District of New York announced that JUAN CARLOS RAMIREZ-ABADIA, a/k/a "Chupeta," one of the leaders of Colombia's most powerful cartel, known as the "Norte Valle Cartel" ("NVC"), was extradited today to face federal charges in the District of Columbia and the Eastern District of New York.

RAMIREZ-ABADIA was arrested by the Brazilian Federal Police in August 2007. At the time, the U.S. State Department was offering an award of up to \$5 million for information leading to RAMIREZ-ABADIA's capture. RAMIREZ-ABADIA was subsequently convicted on Brazilian charges in a Brazilian court and sentenced to serve 30 years in prison. This week the Brazilian Government authorized the defendant's extradition to the United States where RAMIREZ-ABADIA will face federal murder, drug trafficking and money laundering charges in the Eastern District of New York and will face federal drug trafficking and racketeering charges in the District of Columbia.

The NVC operated principally in the Norte Valle del Cauca region of Colombia and is allegedly responsible for exporting more than 500 metric tons of cocaine worth more than \$10 billion from Colombia to the United States, with RAMIREZ-ABADIA having controlled a large percentage of those drug exports. RAMIREZ-ABADIA is alleged to have employed hundreds of individuals who worked for him in various "offices," or crews, including: the "Drug Offices," which allegedly manufactured, transported and exported multi-ton loads of cocaine from Colombia to Mexico, ultimately destined for the United States; the "Money Laundering Offices," which allegedly employed dozens of money launderers, money couriers, accountants and individuals who operated multimillion dollar "coletas," or money stash houses; the "Corruption Offices," which allegedly were responsible for

paying bribes to police and public officials in exchange for information about law enforcement actions against members of the Norte Valle Cartel; and the "Offices of the Sicarios," or hitmen, which allegedly employed dozens of gunmen who carried out hundreds of murders, tortures, kidnappings and violent collections of drug debts at the direction of RAMIREZ-ABADIA. To date, law enforcement officers in the United States, Mexico and Colombia have seized more than 48,000 pounds of cocaine from the Norte Valle Cartel. In addition, DEA agents in Brazil and Colombia, working with their local counterparts in law enforcement, have assisted in the forfeiture of hundreds of millions of dollars of RAMIREZ-ABADIA's foreign assets, representing the illegal proceeds of the massive drug operation.

"The Norte Valle Cartel is a sophisticated and dangerous cocaine trafficking organization that, for almost two decades, has smuggled more than \$10 billion worth of cocaine from Colombia to the United States," said U.S. Attorney MICHAEL J. GARCIA. "As one of its leaders, RAMIREZ-ABADIA oversaw the complex drug trafficking operation and use of violence to preserve the Cartel's power and control."

"For years, RAMIREZ-ABADIA and his organization made billions of dollars by exporting misery to the United States through drug trafficking and murder," stated U.S. Attorney BENTON J. CAMPBELL. "His illegal operation included drug manufacturers, couriers, money launderers and accountants, and he and his cohorts resorted to bribery, kidnapping, torture, and even murder to further their goal of making as much money as possible. Now, he will be held to account in a U.S. court of law."

"Today, one of the most violent and prolific narcotics traffickers in the hemisphere has been extradited to the United States to be held accountable for his crimes. RAMIREZ-ABADIA, a long-time drug kingpin, now faces justice in a U.S. court of law," said DEA Acting Administrator MICHELE M. LEONHART. "DEA and our law enforcement partners in Brazil and Colombia successfully targeted and attacked RAMIREZ-ABADIA's assets, having seized more than \$700 million in cash and assets from his organization, which put him on the run. DEA will continue to cripple drug kingpins by depriving them of their drug profits and operating funds."

RAMIREZ-ABADIA was initially indicted on drug trafficking charges in the Eastern District of New York in 1994. On Dec. 21, 2004, the grand jury returned a new indictment charging RAMIREZ-ABADIA with drug trafficking. On June 27 and Aug. 29, 2007, the grand jury returned superseding indictments charging RAMIREZ-ABADIA with: ordering a hit team to shoot and kill Vladimir Biegelman, an employee of RAMIREZ-ABADIA's drug organization in Queens, N.Y., on Dec. 2, 1993; overseeing a

continuing criminal enterprise; international drug trafficking; and conspiring to launder the proceeds of his drug empire.

On March 11, 2004, a federal grand jury in the District of Columbia indicted RAMIREZ-ABADIA and eight other Norte Valle Cartel leaders on drug trafficking and racketeering charges, and a superseding indictment was returned on April 29, 2004. The superseding indictment alleges, among other things, that the NVC and its members used violence and brutality to further their goals, including routinely murdering rivals, individuals who failed to pay for drugs and NVC members and associates whose loyalty was suspect. In approximately January 2004, RAMIREZ-ABADIA is alleged to have shot and killed Luis Alfonse Ocampo-Fomeque, a/k/a "Tocayo Patino," an NVC member, based on RAMIREZ-ABADIA's suspicion that Ocampo-Fomeque was working as an informant for the DEA.

The District of Columbia case resulted from an investigation led by the U.S Attorney's Office in the Southern District of New York, with cooperation and support from the U.S. Attorneys' Offices in the Eastern District of New York and the Southern District of Florida, as well as the Criminal Division's Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section. The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York is responsible for prosecuting RAMIREZ-ABADIA in the District of Columbia. In addition, the DEA worked with law enforcement in Colombia, Brazil and in the United States in these investigations.

Both the Eastern District of New York and District of Columbia indictments contain forfeiture allegations. The District of Columbia superseding indictment requires RAMIREZ-ABADIA to forfeit \$10 billion.

Assistant United States Attorneys REBECCA MONCK-RICIGLIANO and MARSHALL CAMP are in charge of the prosecution of the District of Columbia case.

The charges contained in the indictments are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.