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**U.S. ANNOUNCES ARREST OF ALLEGED MAJOR COCAINE
TRAFFICKER AS PART OF MULTI-YEAR INVESTIGATION
INTO MEXICAN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced today the arrest of JAVIER ALEJANDRO a/k/a "Osvaldo," charged as a major narcotics trafficker responsible for selling large kilogram quantities of cocaine in the New York City area. ALEJANDRO made his first appearance in this District and was arraigned today in Magistrate Court. ALEJANDRO's arrest resulted from a multi-year investigation of an international narcotics trafficking organization responsible for smuggling tens of millions of dollars worth of illegal drugs across the Mexican border for distribution in the New York City area. According to documents filed in Manhattan and Raleigh, North Carolina federal court:

In 2005, the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force (which consists of agents and officers of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New York City Police Department and New York State Police, and the United States Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, with assistance in this case from DEA's Nashville Resident Office, Boston Division Office, Los Angeles Division Office, El Paso Division Office, McAllen District Office, Dayton Resident Office, Philadelphia Division Office, and Las Vegas District Office, Special Operations Division) initiated a series of operations

designed to dismantle the organization's network of transporters and distributors located in the United States. During the course of this investigation, initially designated "Operation Riddler," the Task Force obtained information from multiple confidential sources, conducted extensive surveillance, and received authorization from the United States District Court to intercept over forty telephones used by members of the Organization. The Court also authorized the Task Force to install a bug and camera to intercept audio and visual communications in a storefront operation in Manhattan used by the Organization to launder its drug proceeds.

As a result of the information obtained during the investigation, the Task Force arrested more than 60 individuals engaged in narcotics trafficking, narcotics importation, and money laundering. The initial investigation, "Operation Riddler," evolved into numerous other cases: "Operation Joker," "Operation Penguin," "Operation Mr. Freeze," "Operation Scarecrow," and "Operation Mad Hatter" (collectively the "Gotham City Cases") - each focused on a different cell or cells in the Organization's network. During its investigation, the Task Force learned that the Organization used tractor trailers to transport large shipments of cocaine and marijuana across the Mexican border, with New York City as the final destination. The Organization also imported large quantities of crystal methamphetamine into New York by sending it through the mails.

To date, the Gotham City Cases have resulted in the seizure of approximately \$6.9 million in narcotics proceeds, at least \$5.1 million in property purchased with illegal proceeds, a \$340,000 luxury yacht, and approximately \$40,000 in jewelry. With respect to narcotics seizures, the Task Force seized approximately 750 kilograms of cocaine, 11.2 pounds of crystal methamphetamine, and 1,821 pounds of marijuana. The Task Force's efforts also resulted in the seizure of seventeen handguns and five assault rifles.

During the investigation, and specifically as part of "Operation Mad Hatter," the Task Force identified ALEJANDRO as a major narcotics trafficker from Mexico who set up his base of operations in the New York City area. In 2006, the Task Force received authorization to intercept seven telephones specifically used by ALEJANDRO. In hundreds of recorded telephone calls, ALEJANDRO was heard negotiating the importation and distribution of numerous, large loads of narcotics and the laundering of narcotics proceeds. Based on these intercepted calls, the Task Force was able to thwart several large drug transactions and arrest ALEJANDRO's co-conspirators, dismantling a network of ALEJANDRO's customers, including a group of Bronx-based rappers.

ALEJANDRO has been a fugitive since December 2006 and

recently was discovered and arrested in the Eastern District of North Carolina. Of the more than 60 defendants arrested in connection with this case: 15 have pleaded guilty and have been sentenced; 15 have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing; and 30 have cases pending.

ALEJANDRO is scheduled to appear before United States District Judge LAURA TAYLOR SWAIN on March 5, 2008.

Mr. GARCIA praised the Task Force and its members for its work in this case, stating, "The apprehension of the fugitive Javier Alejandro, charged with selling large quantities of cocaine in the New York City area, is the latest example of our law enforcement partners' impressive work and their dedication to this operation, which has resulted in a very significant number of arrests and seizures."

Mr. GILBRIDE stated, "The operation was named Riddler, but this investigation left no questions to be answered regarding the magnitude of this organization's drug trafficking operation. With seizures of tens of millions of dollars worth of drugs, \$7 million dollars of drug proceeds and thousands of pounds of marijuana, this investigation unearthed a drug trafficking organization that operated from Mexico to New York using tractor trailers and other methods to transport over 700 kilograms of cocaine to the streets of New York City. Those behind this operation did not stop there; they also smuggled multiple kilograms of methamphetamine and hundreds of pounds of marijuana into our neighborhoods. Due to the incredible law enforcement collaboration, this organization has seen its demise and has been dismantled."

Assistant United States Attorneys AMY FINZI, GLEN G. McGORTY and JEFFREY A. BROWN are in charge of ALEJANDRO's prosecution. VIRGINIA CHAVEZ ROMANO, PARVIN MOYNE, TODD BLANCHE, and KENNETH POLITE are responsible for various other related cases.

The charges contained in the relevant Indictments are merely accusations, and defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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