



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 11, 2008

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

GUATEMALAN COCAINE KINGPIN SENTENCED
TO 262 MONTHS IN PRISON

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that BYRON BERGANZA -- a Guatemalan cocaine kingpin captured in El Salvador in 2003 -- was sentenced today by United States District Judge THOMAS P. GRIESA to 262 months in prison on charges of conspiring to import millions of dollars' worth of cocaine into the United States from Colombia and Central America. According to documents filed and statements made in Manhattan federal court:

BERGANZA was involved in the trafficking of over 20 tons of cocaine, beginning in 1988 and including a 70-kilogram shipment to the United States which BERGANZA planned in 2002. One of BERGANZA's 2002 co-conspirators later informed the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") in El Salvador of the shipment, resulting in an undercover investigation of BERGANZA by DEA agents in El Salvador and New York. BERGANZA was arrested in September 2003 as he traveled to El Salvador to meet with the informant about an additional 500-kilogram shipment of cocaine.

In determining the sentence, Judge GRIESA found that BERGANZA conspired to transport at least as much as the highest quantity of cocaine categorized by the United States Sentencing Guidelines (150 kilograms). He also found that BERGANZA was a leader and organizer of criminal activity. In imposing the sentence of just under 22 years in prison, Judge GRIESA noted that people had died, or at least died prematurely, as a result of the large quantities of cocaine BERGANZA was responsible for transporting.

Mr. GARCIA praised the work of the DEA's New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force and its San Salvador, El Salvador Country Office, which, with the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit, jointly led the

investigation of BERGANZA; as well as the DEA's Guatemala City Country Office, which also assisted in the investigation. He also praised the efforts of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, which is comprised of agents and officers of the DEA, New York City Police Department, and New York State Police. Mr. GARCIA also thanked the El Salvadoran National Police for its assistance in the investigation and arrest of BERGANZA.

The prosecution was handled by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit.

08-090

###