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LEADER OF COLOMBIAN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION AUC
SENTENCED TO MORE THAN 31 YEARS IN PRISON
FOR COCAINE TRAFFICKING

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and MICHELE M. LEONHART, the Acting Administrator of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced the sentencing today of DIEGO FERNANDO MURILLO-BEJARANO, a/k/a "Don Berna," a/k/a "Don Bernardo," a/k/a "Adolfo Paz," the former leader of the *Autodefensas Unidas De Colombia* ("AUC"), a Colombian paramilitary group designated by the United States Department of State as a foreign terrorist organization. United States District Judge RICHARD M. BERMAN sentenced MURILLO-BEJARANO to 375 months in prison for conspiring to import multi-ton quantities of cocaine into the United States. In addition to the prison term, Judge BERMAN ordered MURILLO-BEJARANO to pay a fine of \$4 million.

According to the Indictment to which MURILLO-BEJARANO pleaded guilty, and statements made during his plea and sentencing proceedings:

The AUC is a right-wing paramilitary organization based in Colombia, engaged in armed conflict with the *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* ("FARC"), Colombia's main left-wing guerilla group. To support its terrorist paramilitary activities and to enrich its leaders, the AUC is involved in narcotics trafficking, and is responsible for the importation of multi-ton quantities of cocaine into the United States. Among other things, the AUC oversaw the transportation of cocaine by sea, via speedboats and cargo vessels, from Colombia to the United States, either directly or through third countries. MURILLO-BEJARANO

held the title of Inspector General of the AUC, but was the *de facto* leader of the organization, in charge of its narcotics-trafficking activities, including all of its cocaine transportation and financial operations. MURILLO-BEJARANO maintained his power in the AUC in part from the proceeds of his drug-trafficking activities.

The cocaine shipped to the United States by the AUC generated millions of dollars in New York and other cities in the United States. At the direction of individuals working under the supervision of MURILLO-BEJARANO's organization, these sums were placed in bags or suitcases and exchanged at pre-arranged locations to allow the repatriation of the narcotics proceeds to Colombia while concealing the illicit nature of the funds.

Mr. DASSIN praised the investigative work of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force -- which includes agents and officers of the DEA, the New York City Police Department, and the New York State Police -- the DEA's Bogota, Colombia, Country Office and Merida, Mexico, Regional Office, and the Department of Homeland Security's United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Mr. DASSIN also thanked the Department of Justice Office of International Affairs, the United States Marshals Service, the Colombian National Police, and the Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad for their valuable assistance in the case.

"Today's sentencing marks the end of a criminal career that caused immeasurable harm in Colombia and the United States," said Acting United States Attorney LEV L. DASSIN.

"Today's sentencing of Diego Murillo-Bejarano helps mark an end to a vicious chapter in the history of Colombia. This infamous drug kingpin will now be locked away in a U.S. prison, no longer able to terrorize Colombians or ply his deadly trade," said DEA Acting Administrator MICHELE M. LEONHART. "The DEA is proud of our close partnership with the courageous Colombians in our relentless pursuit of international drug traffickers."

The case is being prosecuted by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys ERIC SNYDER, ANJAN SAHNI, and JESSE M. FURMAN are in charge of the prosecution.

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