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**UNITED STATES ANNOUNCES HISTORIC TRANSFER OF DEFENDANTS
FROM SIERRA LEONE TO FACE COCAINE IMPORTATION CHARGES**

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 that GERALDO QUINTANA-PEREZ, a/k/a "El Viejo," a/k/a "German Quintero," and HARVEY STEVEN PEREZ, a/k/a "Miguel," had arrived in the Southern District of New York from Sierra Leone today to face charges of conspiring to import cocaine into the United States. The defendants, who had been in custody in Sierra Leone on Sierra Leonean charges, were transferred by the Government of Sierra Leone to the custody of the United States to face narcotics trafficking charges in this country. This marks the first defendant transfer ever by the Government of Sierra Leone to the United States.

QUINTANA-PEREZ, 51, and PEREZ, 30, were arrested in Freetown, Sierra Leone on July 13, 2008 on Sierra Leonean charges, following the seizure of approximately 600 kilograms of cocaine. Upon their arrest in Sierra Leone, the defendants were tried there on drug trafficking charges, of which they were convicted on April 20, 2009. Thereafter, the Government of Sierra Leone transferred the defendants to American custody.

GERALDO QUINTANA-PEREZ and HARVEY STEVEN PEREZ have been charged in the United States in an Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court with conspiracy to distribute cocaine, including specifically approximately 600 kilograms of cocaine that they, together with other co-conspirators, possessed in Freetown, Sierra Leone, on July 13, 2008.

QUINTANA-PEREZ and PEREZ are each charged with one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine and if convicted, face a maximum penalty of life in prison.

The case has been assigned to United States District Judge ROBERT P. PATTERSON. QUINTANA-PEREZ and PEREZ are expected to appear before United States Magistrate Judge ANDREW J. PECK later today. They will be arraigned tomorrow before Judge PATTERSON at 3:30 p.m.

Acting United States Attorney LEV L. DASSIN stated: "This is the first transfer of defendants from Sierra Leone. We hope that the transfer of these defendants to American custody marks the beginning of a strong partnership between the United States and Sierra Leone in combating the international drug trade, which poses a serious threat to both countries."

"History is made today, showing Sierra Leone's growing commitment to capture global narco-traffickers who destroy lives with their deadly drugs," said DEA Acting Administrator MICHELE M. LEONHART. "With hundreds of kilos of cocaine seized and convictions in Sierra Leone, the defendants will face American justice, on American soil, and receive the fate they deserve."

Mr. DASSIN thanked Ambassador June Carter Perry and His Excellency Ernest Bai Koroma, the President of Sierra Leone, for their vital roles in facilitating the transfer of QUINTANA-PEREZ and PEREZ.

The charges unsealed today were the result of the close cooperative work of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the DEA, the Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs, and the Department of State.

Assistant United States Attorneys REBECCA M. RICIGLIANO, BRENDAN R. MCGUIRE, and ANJAN SAHNI are in charge of the prosecution.

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

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