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**TOP FARC ASSOCIATE SENTENCED TO 29 YEARS IN PRISON  
FOR CONSPIRING TO IMPORT TONS OF COCAINE  
INTO THE UNITED STATES**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration's New York Field Division ("DEA"), announced that ERMINSO CUEVAS CABRERA, a/k/a "Mincho," a top associate of the narco-terrorist organization Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or "FARC") was sentenced today by United States District Judge THOMAS F. HOGAN in the District of Columbia federal court to 29 years in prison for conspiring to import ton-quantities of cocaine into the United States.

According to the Indictment and evidence presented at trial:

The FARC is a Colombian narco-terrorist group and a U.S. State Department-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. The FARC, which occupies large swaths of territory in Colombia, is a hierarchical organization which, at its height during the time of the conspiracy, was comprised of 12,000 to 18,000 members. At the lowest level, the FARC is made up of 77 distinct military units, called Fronts, organized by geographical location. These in turn are grouped into seven "blocs." The FARC is led by a seven-member Secretariat and a 27-member Central General Staff, or Estado Mayor, responsible for setting the cocaine policies of the FARC. The FARC is responsible for the production of more than half the world's supply of cocaine and nearly two-thirds of the cocaine imported into the United States, and is the world's leading cocaine manufacturer. The FARC initially involved itself in the cocaine and cocaine paste trade by imposing a "tax" on individuals involved in every stage of

cocaine production. Later, in the 1990s, recognizing the profit potential, FARC leadership ordered that the FARC become the exclusive buyer of the raw cocaine paste used to make cocaine in all areas under FARC occupation.

In the late 1990s, the FARC leadership met and voted unanimously in favor of a number of resolutions, including resolutions to: expand coca production in areas of Colombia under FARC control; expand the FARC's international distribution routes; increase the number of crystallization labs in which cocaine paste would be converted into cocaine; appoint members within each Front to be in charge of coca production; raise prices that the FARC would pay to campesinos (peasant farmers) from whom they purchased cocaine paste; and mandate that better chemicals be used to increase the quality of cocaine paste.

In late 2001 or early 2002, the FARC leadership met and further resolved, among other things, to: increase cocaine trafficking routes overseas, including to the United States; establish better ways to exchange cocaine and cocaine paste for weapons; and to pay more to campesinos for cocaine paste.

CUEVAS CABRERA, 49, worked as the chief of cocaine manufacturing for the FARC's 14<sup>th</sup> Front. CUEVAS CABRERA's brother, FABIAN RAMIREZ, served as Commander of the Southern Bloc of the FARC and was the head of the 14<sup>th</sup> Front. CUEVAS CABRERA was extradited to the United States on September 19, 2007. On April 13, 2010, after a two-month trial, a jury found CUEVAS CABRERA and his co-defendant, JUAN JOSE MARTINEZ VEGA, a/k/a "Chiguiro," guilty of one count of conspiring to import cocaine into the United States and one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine with the knowledge and intent that it would be imported into the United States.

The evidence at trial established that, in his capacity as the 14<sup>th</sup> Front's chief of cocaine manufacturing, CUEVAS CABRERA directed the weekly production of thousands of kilograms of cocaine at hidden jungle laboratories controlled by the FARC and coordinated the sale and transportation of this cocaine. In total, from approximately 1998 through 2004, CUEVAS CABRERA conspired with others to manufacture and distribute literally tons of cocaine in Colombia, which he knew and intended would be imported into the United States.

The investigation resulting in these charges was led by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, working with the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force (which consists of agents and officers of the DEA, the New York City Police Department, the United States Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforce Office of Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the New York State Police), the DEA's Bogotá, Colombia, Country Office, and the Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Section of the Department of Justice's Criminal Division. The investigation, conducted under the auspices of the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Program, involved unprecedented cooperation from the Colombian government.

Mr. BHARARA praised all the law enforcement partners involved in the investigation, and thanked the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs, as well as the Criminal Division's Judicial attachés in Bogotá for their involvement in the extradition process.

This case is being prosecuted in the District of Columbia by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. Assistant U.S. Attorneys PABLO QUIÑONES and RANDALL JACKSON of the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit are in charge of the prosecution.

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