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**COLOMBIAN COCAINE KINGPIN SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS
IN PRISON FOR TRAFFICKING MORE THAN A
BILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF COCAINE
INTO THE UNITED STATES**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that Colombian cocaine kingpin JORGE ASPRILLA-PEREA was sentenced to 30 years in prison for importing and/or distributing more than 50,000 kilograms of cocaine. ASPRILLA-PEREA, who was extradited from Colombia to the United States in 2000, pleaded guilty to cocaine importation and distribution charges in May 2002. United States District Judge THOMAS P. GRIESA imposed the sentence in Manhattan federal court today. In addition to the 30 year sentence, Judge GRIESA also imposed a term of 5 years supervised release. According to the Indictment to which ASPRILLA-PEREA pleaded and statements made today during his sentencing:

ASPRILLA-PEREA, 51, was the head of the "Los Niches Cartel," a cocaine transportation organization that shipped thousands of kilograms of cocaine to the United States through the Colombian port city of Buenaventura. ASPRILLA-PEREA operated his organization from a jail cell in Cali, Colombia and admitted, in a post-plea stipulation with the Government, that he imported into the United States and/or distributed at least 50,000 kilograms of cocaine -- a quantity representing a street value of more than \$1 billion.

ASPRILLA-PEREA was arrested by Colombian authorities at the request of the United States in February 1999, and was extradited to the Southern District New York to face the charges against him in October 2000.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative efforts of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration and thanked law

enforcement officials in Colombia for their assistance in the investigation, arrest and prosecution of this important international target.

Mr. GARCIA stated: "Today, one of the most prolific cocaine traffickers in history has paid the price for bringing his drugs to the streets of the United States. This Office, together with its domestic and international law enforcement partners, will continue to bring the world's biggest drug kingpins to justice."

The ASPRILLA-PEREA prosecution is being handled by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys KEVIN R. PUVALOWSKI and PABLO QUIÑONES are in charge of the prosecution.

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