



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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**FORMER COLOMBIAN NATIONAL POLICE OFFICER FOUND GUILTY
OF CONSPIRING TO DISTRIBUTE OVER TWO TONS OF COCAINE**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced the conviction today of JAIME ENRIQUE ROMERO-PADILLA, formerly a lieutenant in the antinarcotics division of the Colombian National Police ("CNP"), who was previously extradited from Colombia to face cocaine charges. The defendant was found guilty this afternoon, following a one-week jury trial in Manhattan federal court before United States District Judge DENISE L. COTE. According to documents filed in this case and the evidence at trial:

ROMERO-PADILLA attempted to use his police contacts to secure safe passage for large cocaine shipments from Bogota's El Dorado International Airport and other locations. Specifically, from August until October 2005, ROMERO-PADILLA paid bribes to two active CNP officers whom he believed to be corrupt. ROMERO-PADILLA paid the officers to facilitate a shipment of 409 kilograms of cocaine, worth an estimated \$12 million dollars, from the Bogota Airport to Mexico City. ROMERO-PADILLA also assisted with the packaging, storage and transport of the cocaine en route to the Bogota Airport. The CNP officers ROMERO-PADILLA bribed actually were working with the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), which seized the cocaine in Mexico City.

In early 2006, ROMERO-PADILLA worked on a second large shipment of cocaine -- consisting of approximately 1,700 kilograms -- which was scheduled to leave from the Colombian port city of Buenaventura to Manzanillo, Mexico, en route to the United States. On several occasions in February and March 2006, ROMERO-PADILLA traveled to Buenaventura to bribe police officers at that port. In addition, he secured warehouse space for the packaging and storage of the cocaine, which was to be disguised inside bags of hard candies. That shipment, with a U.S. street

value of more than \$50 million, was seized by CNP officers working with DEA, from two locations in Bogota, Colombia, before it could be shipped.

ROMERO-PADILLA was found guilty of both counts of the Indictment against him: conspiracy to distribute cocaine knowing that it would be imported into the United States, and the substantive distribution of cocaine knowing that it would be imported into the United States. Although each of these charges carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, the United States provided assurances to the Government of Colombia as part of the extradition process that a life sentence would not be sought. ROMERO-PADILLA is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge COTE on June 13, 2008, at 3:00 p.m.

This case was the result of "Operation Caso Dorado," an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force investigation conducted by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York (the "Office"), and the Bogota, Colombia, and New York offices of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), with the cooperation of the United States Department of Homeland Security, Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE"), Colombian and Mexican law enforcement authorities, the New York City Police Department, and the New York State Police Department.

Mr. GARCIA praised the cooperative investigative efforts of the DEA, and also commended Colombian law enforcement officers for their partnership in the case.

The case is being handled by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit; MARC P. BERGER and KEVIN R. PUVALOWSKI are in charge of the prosecution.

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