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**FORMER FARC GUERRILLAS PLEAD GUILTY IN MANHATTAN
FEDERAL COURT TO CONSPIRING TO PROVIDE MATERIAL
SUPPORT TO A FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced that JORGE ABEL IBARGUEN-PALACIO, a/k/a "Turbo," and YARLEI BAÑOL-RAMOS, a/k/a "Diana," former guerillas for the 57th Front of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (the "FARC"), pled guilty in Manhattan federal court to conspiring to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization. They were arrested by the Panamanian National Police ("PNP") after engaging PNP officers in a firefight on vessels off the coast of Panama in February of 2008. IBARGUEN-PALACIO pled guilty last Friday before U.S. Magistrate Judge MICHAEL H. DOLINGER; BAÑOL-RAMOS pled guilty today before U.S. Magistrate Judge HENRY B. PITMAN.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "These guilty pleas once again reflect this Office's steadfast commitment to the fight against international narco-terrorism. We will continue to work with the DEA and our partners overseas to target violent, transnational narcotics trafficking and terrorist organizations like the FARC that threaten our national security."

DEA Special Agent-in-Charge JOHN P. GILBRIDE stated: "The guilty pleas by Jorge Abel Ibarquen-Palacio and Yarlei Bañol-Ramos exemplify the commitment of the United States and our valued international partners to ensure that safe havens will not exist for those who foster international drug trafficking, terrorism and violence. These pleas represent a significant victory against the FARC, and send a message that together with our international partners we will bring to justice those who intend on inflicting harm against the citizens of the United States, Colombia, and Panama."

According to the Indictment to which IBARGUEN-PALACIO and BAÑOL-RAMOS pled guilty, the criminal Complaint previously filed against them, related Indictments of other FARC guerillas whose cases are pending in the Southern District of New York, and statements made during the guilty plea proceedings:

The FARC is a terrorist group dedicated to the violent overthrow of Colombia's democratically-elected government. It consists of a highly structured criminal organization, styled as a military group with "blocs," "fronts," and "militias," as well as governing bodies known as the "Secretariat" and the "Estado Mayor." The 57th Front of the FARC is located in the Choco Department of Colombia, which borders the Republic of Panama. The 57th Front is involved in cocaine trafficking and is also involved in obtaining supplies such as weapons, ammunition, uniforms, and other items for itself and other FARC fronts. The 57th Front also funds itself by kidnapping for ransom.

Among other things, the Front was responsible for an incident on January 13, 2008, in which nineteen tourists were robbed, six of whom were taken hostage. In April of 2008, after IBARGUEN-PALACIO and BAÑOL-RAMOS were arrested, the 57th Front kidnapped an American citizen living in Panama and held him hostage for over ten months until a ransom was paid. IBARGUEN-PALACIO and BAÑOL-RAMOS were members of the 57th Front, and agreed to work to further the FARC's terrorist activities.

On the morning of February 22, 2008, the Panamanian National Police learned that a boat off the coast of Jaqué, Panama, appeared to need assistance. The police approached the boat in an effort to provide assistance and observed six individuals wearing dark clothing, two of whom were later identified as IBARGUEN-PALACIO and BAÑOL-RAMOS. The Panamanian police officers began to tow the boat to shore. During the towing operation, one of the individuals on the boat pointed a rifle at the police, while four other individuals on the boat also pointed weapons at the police and demanded that the police drop their weapons. The police officers complied.

Other police boats arrived to render assistance and rescued the officers who were being held captive by IBARGUEN-PALACIO, BAÑOL-RAMOS, and their co-conspirators. After an exchange of gunfire, in which at least one Panamanian officer was wounded, IBARGUEN-PALACIO, BAÑOL-RAMOS, and their co-conspirators were arrested and taken into custody by the Panamanian police.

An inventory of the boat revealed that it contained four fully loaded AK-47 automatic weapons and one Galil rifle,

over 900 rounds of live ammunition, military equipment, communication equipment, FARC uniforms, FARC encampment equipment, and explosives and detonators. The presence of cocaine was detected in various sections of the boat.

Following the arrests of the defendants, a communiqué was issued in the name of the head of the FARC's 57th Front. The communiqué confirmed that the defendants were members of the FARC, and contained a veiled threat against the Government of Panama if those arrested were not released.

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IBARGUEN-PALACIO and BAÑOL-RAMOS face a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

Mr. BHARARA praised the work of the DEA's New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force and DEA's Panama Country Office, and also thanked the Fronteriza Policia, part of the Panamanian National Police, for their efforts and assistance.

This case is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys JEFFREY A. BROWN and REBECCA M. RICIGLIANO are in charge of the prosecution.

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