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**FARC LEADER EXTRADITED TO UNITED STATES  
ON COCAINE IMPORTATION CHARGES**

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"), today announced that IGNACIO LEAL GARCIA, a/k/a "El Tuerto," a/k/a "Camilo," a leader of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or "FARC"), has been extradited from Colombia to face cocaine importation conspiracy charges. The FARC, which has been designated by the U.S. State Department as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, is Colombia's main leftist rebel group. LEAL GARCIA is the fifth member to be extradited on an Indictment filed in the District of Columbia charging fifty of the top leaders of the FARC. United States District Judge THOMAS F. HOGAN presides over the case in District of Columbia federal court.

According to the Indictment and other documents filed in the case:

The FARC, which occupies large swaths of territory in Colombia, is a hierarchical organization comprised of twelve to eighteen thousand 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 world's leading cocaine manufacturer, the FARC is responsible for the production of more than half of the world's supply of cocaine and nearly two-thirds of the cocaine imported into the United States.

Before his capture on April 8, 2009, LEAL GARCIA was a

leader of the FARC's 10th Front, in the Eastern Bloc. LEAL GARCIA was responsible for the Front's production and distribution of cocaine and the use of cocaine proceeds to fund the FARC. In that capacity he conspired with others to manufacture and distribute thousands of tons of cocaine in Colombia intended for importation into the United States.

At various meetings, the FARC leadership has voted unanimously to expand its operations. Recognizing that the FARC could not survive without its cocaine revenue, the indicted members of the Secretariat and Estado Mayor directed its members to attack and disrupt coca eradication fumigation efforts. FARC leaders also ordered FARC members to kidnap and murder United States citizens in an effort to dissuade the United States from continuing to contribute to coca eradication.

LEAL GARCIA, 41, arrived yesterday evening in the District of Columbia and appeared today before Magistrate Judge DEBORAH A. ROBINSON in District of Columbia federal court.

Co-defendants GERARDO AGUILAR RAMIREZ, a/k/a "Cesar", JORGE ENRIQUE RODRIGUEZ MENDIETA, a/k/a "Ivan Vargas," ERMINSO CUEVAS CABRERA, a/k/a "Mincho," and JUAN JOSE MARTINEZ VEGA, a/k/a "Chiguero," were previously extradited on the same Indictment.

MARTINEZ-VEGA worked as the FARC's chief associate in its 16th Front, exchanging massive quantities of cocaine for tons of weapons, explosives, ammunition and other logistical supplies. CUEVAS CABRERA worked as the chief of cocaine manufacturing for the FARC's 14th Front. CUEVAS CABRERA and MARTINEZ VEGA were convicted of cocaine importation conspiracy charges after a two-month trial before United States District Judge THOMAS F. HOGAN in District of Columbia federal court.

RODRIGUEZ MENDIETA served as the Commander of the FARC's 24th Front and as a member of the FARC's Estado Mayor. AGUILAR RAMIREZ was the commander of the FARC's 1st Front and was ultimately responsible for all of that Front's criminal activities. RODRIGUEZ MENDIETA pleaded guilty to the charges in the Indictment and was sentenced to 20 years in prison; AGUILAR RAMIREZ pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 27 years in prison.

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The State Department has offered \$75 million in rewards for information leading to the arrest of the highest-ranking FARC leaders who remain fugitives.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "Ignacio Leal Garcia is an alleged leader of an organization that has come to dominate global cocaine exportation by employing violence and terrorism. His extradition is an important step in our fight against narco-terrorism worldwide. We are committed to continuing to work with Colombian authorities and our DEA partners to end the ongoing threat posed by the FARC."

DEA Special Agent-in-Charge JOHN P. GILBRIDE stated: "As a result of this intensive investigation another officer of the FARC has been extradited to the United States to face drug manufacturing and distribution charges. International law enforcement and our prosecutorial partners have worked hand in hand to bring those who are fueling the world's cocaine supply while fostering terror and violence throughout the world - to justice. The extradition of Ignacio Leal Garcia proves international cooperation can lead to a decrease in the use and abuse of illicit drugs and an end to the violence associated with drug trafficking."

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 from the DEA, the New York City Police Department, the United States Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the New York State Police) and the DEA's Bogota, Colombia, Country Office. 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 Department of Justice Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs, as well as Criminal Division's Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section attachés in Bogota for their involvement in the extradition process.

Assistant United States Attorneys PABLO QUIÑONES and RANDALL JACKSON are in charge of the prosecution.

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