



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

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**MANHATTAN FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS COLOMBIAN COCAINE  
KINGPIN ON NARCOTICS AND MONEY LAUNDERING CHARGES**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that a jury in Manhattan convicted MANUEL FELIPE SALAZAR-ESPINOSA, a/k/a "Hoover," this afternoon on cocaine importation and money laundering charges. SALAZAR-ESPINOSA, designated by the Justice Department as one of the world's most significant drug kingpins, had been extradited from Colombia in August 2006, after being arrested there by Colombian authorities the previous year. According to the evidence at trial:

SALAZAR-ESPINOSA conspired with notorious Mexican cocaine cartel leaders ARMANDO VALENCIA-CORNELIO and OSCAR NAVA-VALENCIA to import ton-quantities of Colombian cocaine, through Mexico, to the City of New York, on a weekly basis. SALAZAR-ESPINOSA also assisted in the laundering of \$12 million to \$14 million in narcotics proceeds per week during the period 2002 to 2005. The Government also proved SALAZAR-ESPINOSA's responsibility for a 1.3-ton cocaine shipment destined for the United States, which was seized while concealed in the arm of a crane in Panama in July 2005.

SALAZAR-ESPINOSA was convicted on all counts of a three-count Indictment, charging him with conspiring to import cocaine, distributing cocaine with intent to import, and conspiring to launder narcotics proceeds. He faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment, and a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. The terms of SALAZAR-ESPINOSA's extradition from Colombia require that the United States seek

sentence of a term of years, rather than a life sentence. SALAZAR-ESPINOSA will be sentenced by United States District Judge LEWIS A. KAPLAN on October 2, 2007 at 4:30 PM.

Prior to his arrest, SALAZAR-ESPINOSA had been designated by the Department of Justice to the Consolidated Priority Organization Target ("CPOT") list, a list of the most powerful and dangerous narcotics traffickers in the world. His successful prosecution is the result of an multi-year investigation by this Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit, the Drug Enforcement Administration's New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, its Bogota Country Office, Merida, Mexico Resident Office, and Panama City Country Office, with the assistance of foreign law enforcement authorities in Colombia, Panama and Mexico.

Mr. GARCIA stated: "With today's conviction, HOOVER SALAZAR-ESPINOSA's 20-year-long career of narcotics trafficking and money laundering has come to an end. We are grateful to the many agents of the DEA all over the world, the NYPD Detectives and State Police Investigators in the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, and our law enforcement partners in Colombia, Panama and Mexico, who dedicated themselves to bringing this kingpin to justice."

Assistant United States Attorneys ANIRUDH BANSAL and IRIS LAN are in charge of the prosecution.

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