



*United States Attorney
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FIVE INDICTED FOR PLOT TO MURDER U.S. AGENT IN COLOMBIA

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today the indictment of five members of a Colombian narcotics trafficking organization on charges of conspiring to murder a United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") Agent stationed in Colombia and to import ton quantities of methamphetamine into the United States.

JAVIER MAURICIO VASQUEZ SALDARRIAGA, a/k/a "Carlos", 34, EDGAR ABDON LUNA DIAZ, a/k/a "El Tio", 47, PABLO CESAR RUIZ CALDERON, a/k/a "RR", 31, CARLOS ALEXANDER SILVA BALTAN, a/k/a "Alex", 31, and LILIANA ESPERANZA RESFA VELEZ MUNOZ, 40, were indicted today on charges of conspiring to murder a Federal officer and a confidential informant, and to import ton-quantities of methamphetamine. The defendants had been arrested on June 11, 2009, in Panama by Panamanian authorities after attending a meeting with an undercover DEA agent, and were expelled to the United States for prosecution. According to the Indictment:

The defendants belonged to an international organization based in Colombia that has been involved in the manufacture and transportation of multi-ton quantities of cocaine, methamphetamine and heroin. The organization has secured safe passage for its narcotics by paying bribes to foreign government officials and by acts of violence. In May 2009 the defendants had three meetings with a person who, unbeknownst to them, was working as a confidential source of information ("CS") for the DEA. During the meetings, the defendants discussed the sale of 240 25-kilogram barrels of ephedrine -- a methamphetamine precursor -- to the CS. The defendants also provided the CS with a photograph of a DEA informant and described a vehicle used by a DEA agent stationed in Bogota, Colombia. SILVA BALTAN stated that his organization was going to "erase" the DEA agent and informant "from the map." The defendants also showed the CS a "hit list" with the names of the

DEA agent, the informant, the informant's family members, and other supposed DEA sources of information, and told the CS that the people on the list had been located and were going to be murdered by the drug organization. SILVA BALTAN said his desire to kill the agent was "personal," because some of SILVA BALTAN's friends had been killed in a shootout during a narcotics seizure in Buenaventura, Colombia.

At these May 2009 meetings and the meeting in Panama in June after which the five defendants were arrested, the defendants also negotiated the sale of ephedrine to the CS, and stated that their organization owned labs capable of supplying tons of ephedrine on a weekly basis. During their June meeting with the undercover agent, the defendants offered to assist in the importation of the resulting methamphetamine, and to put the DEA undercover agent in touch with a methamphetamine distributor in Los Angeles, California who would help distribute the narcotics.

An initial conference has been set for July 9, 2009, at 11:00 a.m., before United States District Judge P. KEVIN CASTEL. If convicted, each defendant faces a maximum term of life in prison for conspiracy to murder an officer of the United States, and a maximum term of life in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years in prison for conspiracy to import methamphetamine.

Mr. DASSIN praised the outstanding investigative work of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, which consists of DEA agents and New York City and New York State Police Officers; DEA's Bogota Country Office, and DEA's Panama City Country Office. Mr. DASSIN also thanked the Panamanian National Police, the Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs and the Bogota, Colombia Judicial Attaché's Office for their assistance in the investigation.

The prosecution is being handled by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys JENNA M. DABBS and BENJAMIN A. NAFTALIS are in charge of the prosecution.

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

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