



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 21, 2011

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**THREE FARC GUERILLAS CONVICTED IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL
COURT OF TAKING A U.S. CITIZEN HOSTAGE**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced the convictions of EDILBERTO BERRIO ORTIZ, a/k/a "El Gavilan," ALEJANDRO PALACIOS RENGIFO, a/k/a "El Gato," and ANDERSON CHAMAPURO DOGIRAMA, a/k/a "El Tigre," for hostage-taking and hostage-taking conspiracy in connection with the April 2008 kidnapping of an American Citizen in Panama by the 57th Front of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia ("FARC"), a U.S. designated foreign terrorist organization. The defendants were found guilty on June 20, 2011, by United States District Judge JED S. RAKOFF following a bench trial based on stipulated facts. They were arrested in Colombia in December of 2009 and extradited to the United States in late 2010 and early 2011. After a prior hearing in the case, Judge RAKOFF ruled that the defendants were precluded as a matter of law from presenting a defense of duress to the charges.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA said: "For ten months that must have seemed like a lifetime for him and his family, an American citizen was held captive by the FARC, not knowing if he would live or die. The FARC will stop at nothing to finance their terrorist activities, and this case underscores this Office's continued commitment to working with all our law enforcement partners, both here and abroad, to prosecute those who would do harm to Americans."

According to the Indictment unsealed on September 28, 2009, other court documents, and testimony and exhibits from the hearing and trial:

The FARC was formed in 1964 and is structured as a military organization, with approximately 10,000 armed guerillas organized into seven "blocs," 68 numbered "Fronts" (including the 57th Front), nine named "Fronts," and four urban "militias." It is dedicated to the violent overthrow of Colombia's democratically-elected government and has been designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States Department of State.

The 57th Front operates in the territory within Colombia's Choco Department, which borders Panama. It supports the FARC's terrorist activities through narcotics trafficking and kidnapping for ransom, including the kidnapping of Americans and other foreign nationals.

On April 4, 2008, at the direction of 57th Front leadership, an American citizen was kidnapped in Panama City, Panama. ORTIZ, RENGIFO, and DOGIRAMA guarded the victim while he was held for ransom at a FARC jungle camp for approximately ten months. The ransom was demanded from the victim's relatives in the United States, who were told they would never see him alive again if the ransom was not paid. The victim was released in February 2009, after a member of his family paid the ransom.

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Although the charges carry a maximum sentence of life in prison, the U.S. has given assurances to the Government of Colombia that the defendants will not receive life sentences. ORTIZ, RENGIFO, and DOGIRAMA are scheduled to be sentenced by Judge RAKOFF on October, 24, 2011.

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of the FBI's Extraterritorial Hostage Taking Squad in Miami, the FBI attaché in Panama and Colombia, the DEA's New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force, the Narco-Terrorism Group of the DEA's Bogota Country Office, the DEA's Panama City Country Office, the Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs, and the Department of Justice's National Security Division. Mr. BHARARA also thanked Colombian Navy, the Colombian National Police, the Colombia Attorney General's Office, and the Panamanian National Police for their assistance in the investigation.

The prosecution is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys REBECCA M. RICIGLIANO and JEFFREY A. BROWN are in charge of the prosecution.

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