



***United States Attorney
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**U.S. ARRESTS COLOMBIAN POLICE OFFICERS AND AIRLINE
EMPLOYEES FOR FACILITATING SHIPMENTS OF HEROIN ON
COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS INTO NEW YORK CITY**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, announced today that five individuals, including Colombian law enforcement and airport and airline personnel, were arrested today in Colombia on a provisional arrest warrant issued by Colombian authorities in connection with charges filed in Manhattan federal court of conspiracy to import heroin into the United States. Three others, including two Colombian law enforcement officials, were previously arrested as part of the same investigation. According to the Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court:

From August 2006, if not earlier, HUMBEIRO CARVAJAL-MONTOYA led a drug trafficking organization that smuggled heroin into the United States from Colombia through the Jose Maria Cordoba International Airport in Medellin, Colombia. The CARVAJAL-MONTOYA Organization included law enforcement officials and airport and airline personnel who facilitated the export of heroin through Medellin Airport. Couriers for the Organization smuggled heroin into the United States inside layers of clothing, within the linings of suitcases and handbags, beneath false bottoms of suitcases, inside computers, and inside international cargo, among other means. Organization couriers traveled at

least once a month from the Medellin area to New York City, each time carrying between several hundred grams to several kilograms of heroin at a time. Seizures from five different couriers, including defendant NATALIE RIOS-CANO, who traveled or were scheduled to travel on Avianca Airlines from Medellin to New York City, are specified in the Indictment.

The defendants arrested today were HUMBEIRO CARVAJAL-MONTOYA himself, as well as his wife and partner, DIANA LOPEZ; Colombian National Police officer MANUEL JULIAN LOPEZ-NAIZZIR, a/k/a "El Costeño," a/k/a "El Costeñito," who was assigned to the Airport Police Unit; Medellin Airport security supervisor GERMAN SOTO-VILLA, who worked in the duty free zone; and Avianca employee ELKIN FERNANDO DAZA-RIOS, who worked in the international cargo facility. Two other Colombian National Police officers assigned to the Airport Police Unit, JULIAN DARIO HENAO-VERGARA and HENRY ALBERTO TOBON-CADAVID, as well as courier NATALIE RIOS-CANO, were previously arrested.

The Indictment charges the defendants with a single count of conspiracy to import one kilogram and more of heroin. The defendants are currently in the custody of Colombian authorities and proceedings to extradite them to the United States to stand trial on the Indictment have commenced. The conspiracy charge in the Indictment carries a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years in prison and a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, although the maximum sentence may be subject to certain limitations pursuant to extradition procedures between the United States and Colombia.

The investigation was led by the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, including DEA Special Agents in the New York Field Division and Bogota Country Offices, New York Police Department Detectives and New York State Police Investigators. Mr. GARCIA praised the Task Force and its members for its work in this case, and thanked Avianca Airlines for its assistance in uncovering the conspiracy.

The prosecution is being handled by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys KEVIN R. PUVALOWSKI and SARAH LAI 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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