



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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**CURAÇAO-BASED COCAINE TRAFFICKER SENTENCED TO ALMOST
20 YEARS IN PRISON AND \$3 MILLION FORFEITURE FOR
RUNNING MASSIVE COCAINE DISTRIBUTION CONSPIRACY**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced the sentencing late yesterday of JAMES YEZID VALENCIA RUGELES, a/k/a "Matador," to 235 months' imprisonment in connection with cocaine distribution conspiracy charges. United States District Judge JOHN G. KOELTL of Manhattan federal court also imposed a \$3 million forfeiture judgment. VALENCIA RUGELES, along with his two sons, MARIO ALBERTO VALENCIA MUNEVAR and JAMES JESUS VALENCIA MUNEVAR, had been arrested in Curaçao, the Netherlands Antilles, in March 2004; were extradited to the United States in October 2005; and pleaded guilty in June 2007. According to the Indictment to which VALENCIA RUGELES pleaded guilty:

The VALENCIAS ran a massive cocaine smuggling organization (the "Valencia Organization") that transported ton quantities of cocaine from Curaçao northward to St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles, before eventual importation into Puerto Rico and the continental United States, including New York. The Valencia Organization imported cocaine into Curaçao by container ship and high-speed motorboat from the northern coasts of Venezuela and Colombia (the northern coast of Venezuela is approximately 24 nautical miles south of Curaçao). For example, in October 2003, the Valencia Organization imported from Venezuela to Curaçao 2345 kilograms of cocaine, 15 kilograms of heroin, and 15 kilograms of methamphetamine. In order to receive the narcotics successfully, the Valencia Organization paid corrupt Curaçao law enforcement officials to provide security for the Organization, including by serving as look-outs when a shipment of cocaine was scheduled to arrive. The Organization also paid the officials to provide information about law enforcement's interdiction efforts so that the loads of narcotics could be received without detection and interception. After the

cocaine arrived in Curaçao, the Valencia Organization arranged for its shipment to St. Maarten, where it was stored until it was eventually shipped to Puerto Rico and the continental United States. Payment for the cocaine would be received in United States currency, which was transported back to Curaçao by, among other means, human couriers.

The sentences of VALENCIA RUGELES' sons, MARIO ALBERTO VALENCIA MUNEVAR and JAMES JESUS VALENCIA MUNEVAR, are scheduled to occur before Judge KOELTL on December 6 and 7, 2007, respectively.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative work of the DEA, the Korps Politie Curaçao, the Recherché Samenwerking Team, the Coast Guard of the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, the Curaçao District Attorney's Office, the Colombian National Police, the New York State Police and the New York City Police Department for their cooperation and coordination in this investigation. Mr. GARCIA also thanked U.S. Customs and Border Protection, an agency of the Department of Homeland Security, for their assistance in airlifting the defendants from Curaçao to the Southern District of New York.

This prosecution is being handled by the International Narcotics Trafficking Unit of the United States Attorney's Office. Assistant United States Attorneys NEIL M. BAROFSKY and KEVIN R. PUVALOWSKI are in charge of the prosecution.

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