



*United States Attorney
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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES INDICTMENT
OF ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST SIGNIFICANT NARCOTICS
KINGPINS**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and MICHELE M. LEONHART, Acting Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced today the unsealing of charges against WALID MAKLED-GARCIA, a/k/a "El Turco," a/k/a "El Arabe," a Venezuela-based drug kingpin accused of trafficking tons of cocaine into the United States. MAKLED-GARCIA, who was arrested in Colombia on U.S. charges on August 18, 2010, and is currently in custody there, was designated one of the world's most significant drug kingpins under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act by the President of the United States in May 2009. MAKLED-GARCIA is also a Consolidated Priority Organization Target ("CPOT"), a Department of Justice designation reserved for the most dangerous and prolific narcotics traffickers.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA said: "As the allegations make clear, even among global narcotics traffickers, Makled Garcia is a king among kingpins. He allegedly coordinated a vast international narcotics trafficking organization, and these charges emphasize our commitment to pursue those who flood the United States with poison for their own financial gain. We will continue to work with all of our law enforcement partners in the United States, Colombia, and elsewhere to bring Makled-Garcia to justice in the United States."

DEA Acting Administrator MICHELE M. LEONHART said: "Due to the outstanding work with our partners in Colombia and elsewhere, Makled-Garcia is behind bars and awaiting extradition to the United States for the crimes in this indictment. He is a

foreign drug kingpin with a long history of drug trafficking, and he has built a vast global drug trafficking empire on illicit proceeds. His arrest will impact worldwide supplies of drugs, and we are committed to now ensuring he faces justice in the United States."

According to the Superseding Indictment unsealed today in Manhattan federal court and other documents previously filed by the United States in Colombian extradition proceedings:

From approximately 2006 through August 2010, MAKLED-GARCIA operated and controlled airstrips located in Venezuela. He used them to facilitate the shipment of multi-ton quantities of cocaine from Venezuela to Central America and Mexico by numerous drug trafficking organizations, knowing a portion were destined for the United States. To secure the safe passage of these cocaine shipments, MAKLED-GARCIA bribed Venezuelan officials with fees he extracted from the drug trafficking organizations.

MAKLED-GARCIA, 41, is charged with one count of conspiracy to import cocaine into the United States. If convicted, he faces a maximum sentence of 60 years in prison. The case is assigned to U.S. District Judge ROBERT W. SWEET.

Mr. BHARARA praised the outstanding investigative work of the DEA's Special Operations Division, the DEA's Bogota Country Office, and the DEA's Caracas Country Office. Mr. BHARARA also thanked the Colombian National Police and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs for their ongoing assistance.

The case is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys BENJAMIN NAFTALIS, JENNA DABBS, and GLEN KOPP are in charge of the prosecution.

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

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