



***United States Attorney
Southern District of New York***

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**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
ELLEN DAVIS,
EDELI RIVERA,
JESSIE ERWIN
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600**

**FBI-MIAMI
MICHAEL LEVEROCK
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(305) 787-6108**

**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES EXTRADITION
OF FARC ASSOCIATE CHARGED WITH HOSTAGE-TAKING
OF U.S. CITIZEN**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and JOHN V. GILLIES, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the Miami Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), announced the arrival of EDILBERTO BERRIO ORTIZ, a/k/a "El Gavilan," who was extradited from Colombia on Wednesday, to face charges relating to the April 2008 kidnapping of an American citizen in Panama by members and associates of the 57th Front of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia ("FARC"). ORTIZ was arrested in Colombia in June of 2009.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA stated: "Edilberto Berrio Ortiz allegedly participated in holding an American citizen hostage for ten months. Now, with his extradition, he faces the consequences of his actions. This Office, along with our domestic and international law enforcement partners, is committed to pursuing and bringing to justice individuals who commit crimes against citizens of our county."

According to the Indictment unsealed on September 28, 2009, and other documents previously filed in Manhattan federal court:

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." The FARC is dedicated to the violent overthrow of Colombia's

democratically-elected government and has been designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the U.S. Department of State.

The 57th Front operates in the territory within Colombia's Choco Department, which borders Panama. The 57th Front 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 ROQUE OROBIO LOBON and others, at the direction of 57th Front leadership, including LUIS FERNANDO MORA-PESTANA, a/k/a "Virgilio Antonio Vidal Mora," a/k/a "Silver," and JULIO ENRIQUE LEMOS-MORENO, a/k/a "Andres," planned and executed the kidnapping of an American citizen for ransom in April 2008 in Panama City, Panama. MORA-PESTANA authorized the financing for the kidnapping on behalf of the FARC. ORTIZ, along with fellow 57th Front guerillas ALEJANDRO PALACIOS RENGIFO, a/k/a "El Gato," a/k/a "Yimi," and ANDERSON CHAMAPURO DOGIRAMA, a/k/a "El Tigre," a/k/a "Dairon," guarded the victim while he was held for ransom at a FARC jungle camp. The ransom was demanded from the victim's relatives, who were informed that they would never see the victim alive again if the ransom was not paid. The victim was released in February 2009, after a member of the victim's family paid the ransom.

LOBON, MORA-PESTANA, LEMOS-MORENO, RENGIFO and DOGIRAMA are also charged in the Indictment. LOBON was extradited to the United States in July of 2010. RENGIFO and DOGIRAMA are being held by Colombian authorities pending extradition.

Each of the defendants charged in the Indictment is charged with two counts of hostage taking, each of which carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.

This case has been assigned to U.S. District Judge JED S. RAKOFF.

The arrest and extradition of ORTIZ were the result of the close cooperative efforts of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the FBI, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), the Department of State, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of International Affairs, and the Colombian National Police.

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of the FBI's Extraterritorial Hostage Taking Squad in Miami, 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, and the Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs. Mr. BHARARA also thanked the 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 U.S. Attorneys JEFFREY A. BROWN and REBECCA M. RICIGLIANO are in charge of the prosecution.

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

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