



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

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**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
YUSILL SCRIBNER  
REBEKAH CARMICHAEL  
JANICE OH  
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE  
(212) 637-2600**

**DEA  
ERIN McKENZIE-MULVEY  
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE  
(212) 337-2906**

**ICE  
LUIS MARTINEZ  
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE  
(646) 313-2716**

**LEADER OF MEXICAN COCAINE CARTEL EXTRADITED  
TO THE UNITED STATES FROM MEXICO  
ON NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING CHARGES**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), and PETER J. SMITH, Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Office of the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement ("ICE") announced today the extradition of SANTIAGO CHAVEZ-AYON from Mexico to the United States. CHAVEZ-AYON, a leader of a cocaine cartel based in Sinaloa, Mexico, faces narcotics-trafficking charges in the Southern District of New York. Mexican authorities, pursuant to a request for a provisional arrest from the United States, arrested CHAVEZ-AYON in Sinaloa, Mexico on August 12, 2005. CHAVEZ-AYON was extradited from Mexico today, and will be arraigned tomorrow in Manhattan federal court.

According to a previously-unsealed Indictment in this case and evidence presented at the 2005 trial of two of CHAVEZ-AYON's co-conspirators, JAIME CHAVEZ and ANASTACIO ACOSTA-FELIX:

CHAVEZ-AYON was a leader of the cartel in Sinaloa,

Mexico, and from at least July 2002 until at least April 2003, he conspired with at least 14 other individuals to distribute hundreds of kilograms of cocaine in the United States. CHAVEZ-AYON directly supervised JAIME CHAVEZ, the United States-based leader of this organization, and coordinated the shipment and transportation of this cocaine to the United States, which was then distributed in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York. During court-authorized wire interceptions, CHAVEZ-AYON and JAIME CHAVEZ were intercepted discussing shipments of cocaine, and CHAVEZ-AYON's fears that losses of drugs and drug proceeds would get CHAVEZ-AYON killed.

This extradition is the result of a joint investigation involving the United States Attorney's Office, the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force -- which consists of agents and officers of the Drug Enforcement Administration, New York Police Department and New York State Police -- and ICE in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Mexico. U.S. Attorney GARCIA praised the outstanding investigative work of the DEA and ICE. Assistance regarding the extradition was provided by the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs.

Mr. GARCIA stated: "The extradition of this leader of a Mexican cocaine cartel is the latest example of our continuing cooperation with our law enforcement partners in Mexico to ensure that cartel leaders who target this country face justice in a United States courtroom."

"Santiago Chavez-Ayon has been charged for the shipment of hundreds of kilos of cocaine into American neighborhoods," said DEA Special Agent-in-Charge JOHN P. GILBRIDE. "Today he faces the consequence of his criminal activity: extradition to the United States. DEA stands firmly with our local and international law enforcement partners in this battle against drug traffickers. We will continue to identify those individuals who make millions of dollars from illegal narcotic shipments into the United States and put them out of business."

"This extradition is another example of the great work by our Special Agents and law enforcement partners," said PETER J. SMITH, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Office of Investigation for ICE in New York. Drug smuggling is a serious crime and ICE will use all of its investigative resources to keep illegal drugs off our streets."

If convicted, CHAVEZ-AYON faces a maximum sentence of life in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison. However, pursuant to an extradition treaty with Mexico, the United States has provided assurances to that it will not

seek a life sentence for CHAVEZ-AYON or any other defendant extradited from Mexico.

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

Assistant United States Attorneys ANIRUDH BANSAL and ERIC SNYDER are in charge of the prosecution.

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