



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**COLOMBIAN NARCOTICS TRAFFICKER PLANNING  
AIRDROP OF COCAINE ARRIVES IN  
NEW YORK FROM DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the New York Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), JAVIER F. PENA, the Special Agent-in-Charge of the Caribbean Division of the DEA, RAYMOND W. KELLY, the Police Commissioner of the City of New York, and HARRY J. CORBITT, the Superintendent of the New York State Police ("NYSPP"), announced the expulsion late yesterday from the Dominican Republic to the United States of LUIS SANTACRUZ-ECHEVERRI, a/k/a "Lucho," on charges of cocaine trafficking and importation. On September 27, 2009, SANTACRUZ-ECHEVERRI, a Colombian national, was arrested in the Dominican Republic on an arrest warrant based on the Indictment filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

According to the Indictment unsealed yesterday in Manhattan federal court:

The Indictment alleges that SANTACRUZ-ECHEVERRI discussed a planned airdrop of approximately 500 kilograms of cocaine into the Dominican Republic; that associates of SANTACRUZ-ECHEVERRI possessed approximately 95 kilograms of cocaine in the Dominican Republic; and that SANTACRUZ-ECHEVERRI discussed shipping cocaine to New York.

SANTACRUZ-ECHEVERRI is charged with conspiring to distribute at least five kilograms of cocaine in the United

States, and conspiring to import at least five kilograms of cocaine into the United States. If convicted, SANTACRUZ-ECHEVERRI faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison and a maximum sentence of life in prison on each count.

The case has been assigned to United States District Judge JOHN G. KOELTL. SANTACRUZ-ECHEVERRI is expected to appear in Manhattan federal court later today.

The arrest and expulsion of SANTACRUZ-ECHEVERRI were the result of the close cooperative efforts of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force -- which is comprised of agents and officers of the DEA, the New York City Police Department, and the NYSP -- and the DEA's Santo Domingo Country Office. Mr. BHARARA praised the work of the investigating agencies and also thanked the Dominican National Directorate for Drug Control for their collaboration and significant assistance.

Assistant United States Attorney EUGENE INGOGLIA is in charge of the prosecution, which is being handled by the International Narcotics Trafficking Unit.

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

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