



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES EXTRADITION OF LEADER  
OF INTERNATIONAL DRUG-TRAFFICKING AND  
MONEY LAUNDERING ORGANIZATION**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, and MICHELE M. LEONHART, the Acting Administrator of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), announced the arrival today of JESUS EDUARDO VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ, a/k/a "Padre," a/k/a "Pat," who was extradited from Romania this morning to face cocaine trafficking and money laundering charges in the Southern District of New York.

According to the Superseding Indictment filed on July 7, 2009, and other filed court documents:

VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ was a leader of a sophisticated international cocaine trafficking organization (the "Organization") based in Colombia and Venezuela that operated worldwide, including in Bolivia, Spain, Holland, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry, Mauritania, Mali, Cyprus, and the United States. Beginning in September 2007, members of the Organization sought to purchase a cargo airplane for the purpose of transporting metric tons of cocaine from Venezuela to West Africa. Between September 2007 and March 2009, MANUEL SILVA-JARAMILLO, a member of the Organization arrested earlier this year, conducted meetings in connection with the Organization's efforts to acquire the airplane in, among other places, Madrid, Spain, New York, and Virginia. SILVA-JARAMILLO arranged to finance the purchase of the airplane through a corporation based in Cyprus and to register it in Sierra Leone.

In a meeting in Europe in October 2007, SILVA-JARAMILLO delivered more than 1.25 million Euros in cash -- drug proceeds that represented a partial payment towards the airplane -- which he instructed were to be wire-transferred to different bank accounts in the United States. During one of these meetings, which was recorded, SILVA-JARAMILLO stated that the Organization had between 30 and 60 million Euros in Spain that it needed to launder.

In November 2008, VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ, who identified himself as a leader of the Organization, met in Madrid, Spain with a DEA confidential source who was assisting SILVA-JARAMILLO with the acquisition of the airplane. During this meeting, VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ stated that the Organization enjoyed land support and a private military airfield in Guinea Conakry, located in West Africa, where the Organization could deliver cocaine shipments originating from Venezuela. VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ also indicated that although he understood the airplane to be capable of carrying seven tons of cocaine at a time, the Organization wanted to start with shipments of two to three tons.

In January 2009, VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ met again with the confidential source in Europe. Among other things, VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ stated that the Organization was investigating the possibility of flying shipments of cocaine from Bolivia to West Africa. On the following day, VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ arranged the delivery of 250,000 Euros in cash to the confidential source, which represented an additional payment toward the purchase of the airplane.

On June 10, 2009, VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ traveled to Bucharest, Romania, to attend a meeting concerning the Organization's establishment of a new base of operations. Acting on a provisional arrest request from the United States, Romanian law enforcement authorities arrested VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ in Bucharest, whereupon he was detained pending extradition to New York. VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ arrived in the United States this morning and will be presented later today before United States District Judge ROBERT P. PATTERSON.

VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ is the fifth member of the Organization to have been arrested and brought to the United States to face narcotics conspiracy charges. In April 2009, GERALDO QUINTANA-PEREZ, a/k/a "El Viejo," a/k/a "German Quintero," and HARVEY STEVEN PEREZ, a/k/a "Miguel," were transferred from Sierra Leone to the United States, marking the first ever such transfer of defendants between the two countries. In June 2009, JAVIER CARO, a/k/a "William Zabieh," a/k/a "El

Ingeniero," a/k/a "Javier Gonzalez," was transferred to U.S. custody from the Government of Togo. Also in June 2009, SILVA-JARAMILLO was arrested following a visit to the Dominican Republic.

VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ, 43, and SILVA-JARAMILLO, 55, are both charged with conspiring to distribute at least five kilograms of cocaine in the United States; conspiring to import at least five kilograms of cocaine into the United States; and conspiring to launder narcotics proceeds. If convicted, VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ and SILVA-JARAMILLO each face life in prison for the drug charges and 20 years in prison for the money laundering charge. The remaining three defendants -- QUINTANA-PEREZ, PEREZ, and CARO -- are charged with conspiring to distribute cocaine in the United States.

The arrest and extradition of VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ were the result of the close cooperative efforts of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the DEA, the Department of State, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of International Affairs, the Romanian National Police, and the Danish National Police.

"VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ is charged with participating in a highly sophisticated drug-trafficking network whose criminal activities spanned the globe," said United States Attorney PREET BHARARA. "Whether operating in Latin America, West Africa, Europe, or the United States, his Organization distributed vast quantities of cocaine and generated millions of dollars worth of illicit proceeds. VALENCIA-ARBELAEZ's extradition today reflects the remarkable successes that cooperation between the United States and its partners can produce in the our joint efforts to combat drug-trafficking and money-laundering crimes. We will bring drug kingpins to justice wherever in the world they may be found."

"Today's extradition, combined with preceding indictments and arrests, have put Valencia-Arbelaez and his co-conspirators out of business and behind bars," said MICHELE M. LEONHART, Acting Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration. "Working closely with our partners in countries across four continents, most notably Romania, Denmark, Spain, Sierra Leone, and Togo, this sophisticated international criminal and his organization have been targeted successfully, and their plots to conduct cocaine flights from Venezuela, Bolivia, and elsewhere in Latin America to West Africa effectively disrupted."

Assistant United States Attorneys REBECCA M. RICIGLIANO, BRENDAN R. McGUIRE, and ANJAN SAHNI are 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 defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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