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COLOMBIAN FOREIGN NATIONAL PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL DRUG TRAFFICKING CHARGES FOR HIS ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL COCAINE IMPORTATION CONSPIRACY

PENSACOLA, FLORIDA – Gustavo Adolfo Pareja, 26, of Cali, Colombia, pled guilty today to conspiracy to import 50 kilograms of cocaine for distribution in the United States. Pareja was extradited from Colombia to the Northern District of Florida last month, following an extensive investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration. Lawrence Keefe, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida, announced the guilty plea.

“There is no better example of North Florida law enforcers uniting against drug traffickers than this case,” said U.S. Attorney Keefe. “Local, state and federal law enforcement agencies worked tirelessly to investigate and prosecute all of the conspirators attempting to flood North Florida communities with large amounts of cocaine for personal profit. Pareja’s extradition and holding him accountable here in the United States sends a clear message that if you traffic drugs in our District, we will come for you no matter how far away you are.”

By pleading guilty to the two federal drug trafficking conspiracy charges, Pareja admits he was involved in an international conspiracy with co-defendants Daniel Gould and Henry Royer. Pareja awaited international extradition for over a year before Colombian authorities surrendered him to the United States Marshals Service in October 2020, to be returned to the United States to face the charges filed against him.

Between January and August 2018, in the Northern District of Florida and in the country of Colombia, former Master Sergeant Daniel Gould of the United States Army and Henry Royer, formerly of the United States Army and Army National Guard, conspired to distribute large amounts of cocaine, knowing it would be unlawfully imported into the United States.

The conspiracy began in early 2018 when Gould and Royer initially imported 10 kilograms of cocaine into the United States. Royer traveled to Colombia with U.S. currency to use as payment. Gould placed the cocaine in a gutted punching bag and had the package transported to Bogota to be placed on a United States military aircraft. A few days later, the cocaine-filled punching bag arrived at Duke Field, which is an auxiliary airfield of Eglin Air Force Base. Gould and Royer distributed the 10 kilograms of cocaine in Northwest Florida.

Gould and Royer then reinvested the money from the first load of cocaine into a second load of 40 kilograms of cocaine. Gould placed approximately \$65,000 in cash on a United States military cargo aircraft destined for Colombia as funds for the next purchase. In early August 2018, Gould and Royer returned to Colombia and provided the money to Pareja, their supplier, in exchange for the 40 kilograms of cocaine. Gould and Royer loaded the cocaine into two gutted punching bags, and coordinated transport to the embassy before flying back to the United States. Suspicion was aroused at the embassy when packages were x-rayed, revealing cocaine within gutted out punching bags.

On August 13, 2018, when the cocaine was seized at the embassy, Gould had already returned home and was awaiting its arrival. The 40 kilograms of cocaine would have an estimated value in excess of \$1 million in the Northern District of Florida. Gould and Royer have also pled guilty to their involvement in the criminal activity and are serving sentences in federal prison.

DEA's Miami Field Division Special Agent in Charge Keith Weis was pleased with the development, adding, "Pareja's admission of guilt is proof that the hard work done investigating his drug trafficking crimes by our national and international law enforcement partners was extremely successful."

Pareja faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years up to life in federal prison. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for January 28, 2021, at 10:30 a.m., before Senior United States District Judge Roger Vinson in Pensacola.

This case resulted from an investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program. The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of International Affairs of the Department's Criminal Division provided significant assistance in securing the defendant's extradition from Colombia. Assistant United States Attorney David L. Goldberg is prosecuting the case.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](https://www.uscourts.gov/court-locations/northern-district-of-florida) website. For more information about the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <http://www.justice.gov/usao/fln/index.html>.

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