



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 23, 2006

CONTACT:  
U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
HEATHER TASKER, LAUREN McDONOUGH  
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE  
(212) 637-2600

DEA  
ERIN MULVEY  
(212) 337-2906

**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY EXTRADITES COLOMBIAN KINGPIN  
RESPONSIBLE FOR SMUGGLING MORE THAN  
\$100 MILLION WORTH OF COCAINE INTO THE UNITED STATES**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, JOHN P. GILBRIDE, the Special Agent in Charge of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration in New York, RAYMOND W. KELLY, Police Commissioner of the City of New York, and WAYNE E. BENNETT, Superintendent of the New York State Police (working together as the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force), today announced the successful extradition of MANUEL FELIPE SALAZAR-ESPINOSA, a/k/a "Hoover," from Colombia to the United States. SALAZAR-ESPINOSA, an international drug kingpin who allegedly smuggled more than \$100 million worth of cocaine into the United States, faces narcotics-trafficking and money-laundering charges in the Southern District

of New York. SALAZAR-ESPINOSA landed yesterday evening at White Plains Airport, and will be arraigned at 11:00 a.m. today before United States Magistrate Judge Gabriel W. Gorenstein in Manhattan federal court.

According to a previously unsealed indictment, from 2002 to July 2005 SALAZAR-ESPINOSA led an international narcotics-trafficking enterprise that transported ton-quantity shipments of cocaine by sea -- on board speedboats -- from Colombia to Panama. After the cocaine arrived in Panama, SALAZAR-ESPINOSA's organization secreted the drugs inside heavy machinery which was then transported by special cargo vessels from Panama to Mexico, it was charged. In Mexico, according to the indictment, the cocaine was removed from inside the machinery and turned over to a Mexican drug transportation organization which smuggled the narcotics into the United States to New York and other cities. Between 2002 and July 2005, SALAZAR-ESPINOSA's criminal organization transported more than 5,000 kilograms of cocaine, worth more than \$100 million, from Colombia to Panama to Mexico for ultimate importation into the United States and New York City, it was charged.

Colombian authorities, pursuant to a request for a provisional arrest from the United States, arrested SALAZAR-ESPINOSA in Cali, Colombia on May 23, 2005. Two months later, in July 2005, Panamanian law enforcement officers seized more than

1,300 kilograms of cocaine, worth more than \$25 million, that SALAZAR-ESPINOSA's organization had hidden in the arm of a large crane in a warehouse outside of Panama City. The cocaine seized in Panama was destined for Mexico and ultimately the United States, it was charged. Photographs of the cocaine and the crane are attached hereto.

Mr. GARCIA stated, "The extradition of yet another international cocaine kingpin reaffirms our commitment to prosecuting the world's most powerful drug lords. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners here and in Colombia to ensure that cartel leaders who target the United States ultimately face justice in an American courtroom."

Mr. GILBRIDE stated, "SALAZAR-ESPINOSA is responsible for the shipment of thousands of pounds of cocaine into American neighborhoods. Today he faces the consequence of his criminal activity: extradition to the United States. The DEA stands firmly with our local and international law enforcement partners in this battle against the world's drug kingpins, and 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."

If convicted, SALAZAR-ESPINOSA faces a maximum sentence of life in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, although the United States has provided assurances to

Colombia that it will not seek a life sentence for SALAZAR-ESPINOSA or any other defendant extradited from Colombia.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative efforts of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the New York City Police Department, and the New York State Police, as well as the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force.

The prosecution is being conducted by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys ERIC SNYDER and ANIRUDH BANSAL are in charge of the prosecution.

The charges contained in these Indictment are merely accusations, and SALAZAR-ESPINOSA is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

06-127

###