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**FORMER COLOMBIAN NAVAL PETTY OFFICER EXTRADITED
TO UNITED STATES FOR SELLING NAVAL POSITIONING
CHARTS TO COCAINE TRAFFICKERS**

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced the extradition of JORGE ARTURO SOSA ARGOTE on charges stemming from a conspiracy to sell navigation charts purporting to detail the locations of Colombian and United States Naval and Coast Guard vessels to narcotics importers seeking to avoid interdiction by law enforcement on the high seas.

ARGOTE, 41, arrived in New York last night and was arraigned in Manhattan federal court earlier today. United States Magistrate Judge DEBRA FREEMAN ordered ARGOTE detained. Co-defendants EDUARDO UEJBE JARAMILLO, 55, OTONIEL RICARDO CABARCAS AVENDANO, 45, and RAMEL ANTONIO MARRUGO CASTRO, 41, all of whom were previously extradited from Colombia, have been arraigned and detained pending trial. According to the Indictment and other documents filed in the case:

Beginning in late 2002, JARAMILLO led his co-defendants, including ARGOTE, a retired petty officer with the Colombian Navy who maintained relationships with Naval personnel, to solicit information from co-conspirators regarding the positions of Naval and Coast Guard vessels of the Colombia and United States governments. Until October 2007, the date the Indictment was filed, ARGOTE and his co-defendants sold the information to cocaine-trafficking organizations, which were then able to plan secure maritime export routes for their cocaine while avoiding detection and interdiction of their narcotics shipments.

These trafficking organizations generally transported cocaine from Colombia to trans-shipment points in the Caribbean Sea and Central America. Thousands of kilograms of cocaine were distributed, large quantities of which ultimately were imported

to the United States and other countries, where it was sold for tens of millions of dollars.

ARGOTE and CASTRO, who was a civilian employee at the naval base in Cartagena, Colombia, both operated within the conspiracy as sources of the information relayed to the narcotics trafficking organizations through AVENDANO and JARAMILLO. Each man had relationships with, and access to, individuals in the Colombian Navy and Coast Guard with knowledge of the deployment of ships and aircraft on narcotics-trafficking detection and interdiction patrols and other missions.

AVENDANO, a/k/a "Oto," was also a former petty officer in the Colombian navy, based in Cartagena, Colombia. AVENDANO was primarily responsible for obtaining information regarding the positions of law enforcement and naval vessels, including navigational charts, and conducting the sale of such information in exchange for large sums of money.

JARAMILLO, a/k/a "El Condor," a military contractor, was the proprietor of a company based in Cartagena, Colombia, which contracts with the Colombian coast guard to provide uniforms. Through his relationship with the Colombian Coast Guard, JARAMILLO was able to create and maintain relationships with high-ranking officials of the Colombian Navy and permitted to gain access to confidential information. JARAMILLO also befriended various Colombian Naval officers and forged direct relationships with numerous narcotics trafficking organizations, and on their behalf purchased vessel-positioning information.

ARGOTE, CASTRO, AVENDANO, JARAMILLO, as well as a deceased co-defendant, DIEGO EGIDIO PINZON GOMEZ, have been charged in the Indictment filed in Manhattan federal court. All of the defendants are charged with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute narcotics while onboard a vessel subject to the jurisdiction of the United States. AVENDANO, JARAMILLO, and GOMEZ are also charged with conspiracy to import narcotics into the United States.

If convicted, the defendants each face a maximum sentence on each count of life in prison and a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison. However, pursuant to agreement, the United States has provided assurances to Colombia that the defendants will not be required to serve life sentences.

The case is assigned to United States District Judge JOHN G. KOELTL. The next conference in this matter is scheduled for January 9, 2009, at 10 a.m.

Mr. DASSIN praised the investigative work of the New York Drug Enforcement Task Force, which is comprised of agents and officers from the Drug Enforcement Administration, the New York Police Department and the New York State Police. Mr. DASSIN expressed his gratitude to ICE, Colombian Naval Intelligence, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the United States Coast Guard for their efforts in the investigation. Mr. DASSIN thanked the United States Department of Justice Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs for their involvement in the extradition process.

Assistant United States Attorneys GLEN G. MCGORTY, JEFFREY A. BROWN, and MICHAEL BOSWORTH and are in charge of the prosecution, which is being handled by the Office's International Narcotics Trafficking Unit.

The charges and allegations contained in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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