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SIERRA LEONE MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN MANHATTAN
FEDERAL COURT TO INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS
DISTRIBUTION CONSPIRACY

*Defendant Charged In Connection With Historic Joint Undercover
Operation In The Republic Of Liberia*

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ALI SESAY pled guilty today before United States Magistrate Judge MICHAEL H. DOLINGER to charges of conspiring to distribute cocaine, knowing that a portion of that cocaine would be imported into the United States. SESAY was indicted along with seven other defendants, whose charges are still pending. The Government of Liberia's transfer of SESAY to the United States in May 2010 marked the country's first transfer of a defendant to the United States in connection with narcotics-related charges in over 30 years.

According to the Indictments and other court documents:

During the last decade, drug trafficking organizations based in South America have increasingly used countries along or near the West African coast as trans-shipment hubs for importing massive quantities of cocaine to be later distributed in Europe or elsewhere within Africa. These organizations, predominantly based in Colombia and Venezuela, have transported hundreds of tons of cocaine, worth billions of dollars, to places such as Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Sierra Leone, Togo, Mali, Ghana, Nigeria, and Liberia.

Since 2007, the defendants attempted to bribe high-level officials in the Liberian Government in order to protect shipments of vast quantities of cocaine, and to use Liberia as a trans-shipment point for further distribution of the cocaine in Africa and Europe. In particular, certain of the defendants met with two individuals they knew to be Liberian government officials -- the Director and Deputy Director of the Republic of Liberia National Security Agency ("RLNSA")-- both of whom were actually working jointly with the U.S. Drug Enforcement

Administration ("DEA") in an undercover capacity ("UC-1" and "UC-2", respectively).

In a number of the meetings involving these Liberian officials, the defendants also met with a confidential source working with DEA (the "CS"), who purported to be a business partner and confidante of the Director of the RLNSA.

In seeking to ensure the safe passage of their cocaine shipments, the defendants agreed to make payments in cash and also in the form of cocaine. The CS advised the defendants that a portion of the cocaine paid to the CS would be transported from Liberia to Ghana, from where it would be imported on a commercial flight into New York.

Since 2007, GILBRILLA KAMARA, who is from Sierra Leone, has actively sought to recruit South American drug trafficking organizations to establish operations in various West Africa countries. KAMARA has made efforts to corrupt and influence Government officials within the West African region in order to establish safe havens for the receipt, storage, and trans-shipment of thousands of kilograms of cocaine. GENNOR JALLOH and SESAY, both of whom are also from Sierra Leone, have assisted KAMARA with his drug distribution enterprise and with his efforts to corrupt public officials for the benefit of South American drug trafficking organizations.

KAMARA, JALLOH, and SESAY exchanged a series of emails and telephone calls and held numerous meetings with the CS, the cooperating Liberian officials, and a third Liberian government official who was also working jointly with the DEA in an undercover capacity ("UC-3"), in order to negotiate prices and make specific arrangements for the secure transportation of cocaine from South America through Liberia, including a 4,000 kilogram shipment of cocaine from Colombia. In the course of these meetings, the defendants understood that the CS, who was to be paid by the defendants in the form of cocaine, would send a portion of his share of the cocaine to Ghana, from where it would be imported into New York aboard commercial flights.

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Based on his guilty plea, SESAY faces a minimum sentence of ten years in prison and a maximum term of life imprisonment.

Charges against the defendants in the two indictments remain pending. A trial in U.S. v. Umeh et al. is scheduled for

April 4, 2011. A trial date for KAMARA and JALLOH -- charged in U.S. v. Kamara et al. -- has not yet been set.

This prosecution is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys JENNA M. DABBS, MICHAEL M. ROSENSAFT, CHRISTOPHER LAVIGNE, and RANDALL W. JACKSON are in charge of these prosecutions.

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