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**SIERRA LEONE TRAFFICKER PLEADS GUILTY IN MANHATTAN
FEDERAL COURT TO COCAINE IMPORTATION CHARGES**

*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 GILBRILLA KAMARA pled guilty yesterday before U.S. District Judge WILLIAM H. PAULEY III to conspiring to import cocaine into the United States. KAMARA arrived in the Southern District of New York on May 30, 2010, following his arrest in, and transfer from, Liberia in connection with "Operation Relentless," a joint undercover operation between the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA") and the Government of Liberia.

According to the Indictment to which KAMARA pled guilty, documents previously filed in Manhattan federal court and other information in the public record:

Since 2007, KAMARA, 42, who is from Sierra Leone, has actively sought to recruit South American drug trafficking organizations to establish operations in West African countries including Liberia, Guinea Conakry, Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. 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.

In particular, KAMARA 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 furtherance of these efforts, KAMARA met with two individuals he knew to be Liberian government officials -- the Director and Deputy Director of the Republic of Liberia National Security Agency ("RLNSA") -- both of whom (unbeknownst to KAMARA) were working jointly with the DEA.

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

KAMARA exchanged a series of emails and telephone calls, and held numerous meetings with the CS and the cooperating Liberian officials in order to negotiate prices and make specific arrangements for the secure transportation of cocaine from South America through Liberia. The shipments included, but were not limited to, 4,000 kilograms of cocaine from Colombia. In the course of these meetings, at which the CS was often present, KAMARA understood that the CS, who was to be paid in the form of cocaine, would send a portion of his share to Ghana, from where it would be imported into New York aboard commercial flights.

* * *

KAMARA pled guilty to one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine, knowing and intending that the cocaine would be imported into the United States. This offense carries a mandatory minimum sentence of ten years in prison and a maximum sentence of life in prison. KAMARA will be sentenced by Judge PAULEY on February 3, 2012.

KAMARA was charged along with ALI SESAY and GENNOR JALLOH. SESAY pled guilty in March 2011 and is awaiting sentencing. Charges against JALLOH were dismissed today.

Mr. BHARARA praised the work of the Special Operations Division of the DEA, the DEA Lagos Country Office, the Office of International Affairs of the U.S. Justice Department's Criminal Division, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Embassy in Liberia and government officials of the Republic of Liberia and its National Security Agency for their efforts.

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 the prosecution.

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