



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES FARC LEADER FOUND
GUILTY OF CONSPIRING TO IMPORT COCAINE
INTO THE UNITED STATES**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that IGNACIO LEAL GARCIA, a leader of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or "FARC"), was found guilty today of conspiring to import thousands of kilograms of cocaine into the United States. The FARC, which has been designated by the U.S. State Department as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, is Colombia's main leftist rebel group. LEAL GARCIA was convicted after a three-week jury trial before U.S. District Judge THOMAS F. HOGAN in District of Columbia federal court. LEAL GARCIA, 41, was extradited from Colombia to the United States in July 2010. He is the fifth member of the FARC to be extradited on an Indictment filed in the District of Columbia that charged 50 of the top leaders of the FARC.

According to the Indictment, other documents filed in the case, and statements made during related court proceedings:

The FARC, which occupies large swaths of territory in Colombia, is a hierarchical organization comprised of twelve to eighteen thousand members. The FARC, which is led by a central leadership group, is made up of a number of distinct military units, called Fronts, organized by geographical location. These Fronts, in turn are grouped into seven "blocs." The world's leading cocaine manufacturer, the FARC is responsible for the production of more than half of the world's supply of cocaine and nearly two-thirds of the cocaine imported into the United States.

Before his capture on April 8, 2009, LEAL GARCIA was a leader of the FARC's 10th Front, in the Eastern Bloc. Specifically, LEAL GARCIA controlled all cocaine production and cocaine trafficking in Arauca, a Department of Colombia that stretches over 9,000 square miles near Colombia's border with Venezuela. To exercise this control, LEAL GARCIA organized regular meetings in the various municipalities in Arauca where he

threatened death or exile for anyone who failed to cooperate with the FARC's control of coca farming, cocaine production and cocaine trafficking in the region. Before his capture, LEAL GARCIA orchestrated the manufacture and distribution of thousands of tons of cocaine in Colombia intended for importation into the United States, the proceeds of which were used to fund the FARC. Through this funding, LEAL GARCIA arranged for the purchase of weapons, explosives, and other supplies utilized by hundreds of guerillas in the FARC's Eastern Bloc.

At various meetings, the FARC leadership has voted unanimously to expand its operations. Recognizing that the FARC could not survive without its cocaine revenue, the indicted members of the FARC leadership directed its members to attack and disrupt coca eradication fumigation efforts. FARC leaders also ordered FARC members to kidnap and murder United States citizens in an effort to dissuade the United States from continuing to contribute to coca eradication.

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LEAL GARCIA faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison and maximum sentence of life in prison. In connection with its request for extradition, the United States has assured the Government of Colombia that it will not seek a life sentence for LEAL GARCIA. LEAL GARCIA is scheduled to be sentenced on November 17, 2011.

Co-defendants GERARDO AGUILAR RAMIREZ, JORGE ENRIQUE RODRIGUEZ MENDIETA, ERMINSO CUEVAS CABRERA, and JUAN JOSE MARTINEZ VEGA were previously extradited on the same Indictment, and were all convicted in District of Columbia federal court.

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The State Department has offered \$75 million in rewards for information leading to the arrest of the highest-ranking FARC leaders who remain fugitives.

The investigation resulting in these charges was led by the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, working with the New York Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Strike Force (which is comprised of agents and officers of the DEA, the New York City Police Department, the United States Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Federal Bureau of

Investigation, and the New York State Police) and the DEA's Bogota, Colombia, Country Office. The investigation, conducted under the auspices of the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Program, involved unprecedented cooperation from the Colombian Military, the Colombian National Police, and the Colombian Fiscalia. Mr. BHARARA praised all the law enforcement partners involved in the investigation, and thanked the Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and its Victim-Witness Unit, the Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs Section of the Department of Justice, and the U.S. Department of Justice Attachés in Bogota for their involvement in the extradition process.

This case is being prosecuted in the District of Columbia by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys RANDALL JACKSON and JASON SMITH are in charge of the prosecution.

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