

Remarks as Prepared for Delivery
Remarks Delivered via Teleconference

Today we announce criminal charges against Nicolas Maduro for running, together with his top lieutenants, a narco-terrorism partnership with the FARC for the past twenty years.

The scope and magnitude of the drug trafficking alleged was made possible only because Maduro and others corrupted the institutions of Venezuela and provided political and military protection for the rampant narco-terrorism crimes described in our charges.

As alleged, Maduro and the other defendants expressly intended to flood the United States with cocaine in order to undermine the health and wellbeing of our nation. Maduro very deliberately deployed cocaine as a weapon.

This indictment is the culmination of over a decade of work by our Office and the DEA's Special Operations Division. Since 2006, we have been prosecuting Central American drug traffickers and corrupt officials and developing evidence that provided the foundation for the charges unsealed today.

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While Maduro and other cartel members held lofty titles in Venezuela's political and military leadership, the conduct described in the Indictment wasn't statecraft or service to the Venezuelan people. As alleged, the defendants betrayed the Venezuelan people and corrupted Venezuelan institutions to line their pockets with drug money.

The defendants called their cartel the "Cartel of the Suns." The name they chose reflects the Cartel's identity and operations. It is a direct reference to the sun-shaped stars that Venezuelan military officers wear on their uniforms. Indeed, three former military officers of the highest rank are charged in this indictment.

At the direction of Maduro, and in pursuit of their own personal profits, these officers: negotiated drug sales; protected the FARC's transportation of coca leaves from Colombia; provided safe haven in Venezuela for cocaine manufacturing facilities; and supplied authorization codes and cover for the planes and boats that transported the

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shipments as they began their journey to the United States.

The indictment also charges senior leaders of the FARC—the Colombian terrorist group that has long been one of the largest cocaine producers in the world.

Around 1999, the Cartel invited the FARC to expand its operations across the Colombian border into Venezuela as part of the Cartel’s effort to flood the US with cocaine. In exchange for their contributions, the FARC leaders received caches of military-grade weapons, including machineguns, ammunition, rocket launchers, and explosives; equipment to help fuel their long campaign of terrorism.

[Chart]

This is Maduro, the leader of the Cartel of the Suns. He is charged, along with his co-defendants, with conspiracy to commit narco-terrorism, conspiracy to import hundreds of tons of cocaine into the United States, and related weapons offenses. Together, these crimes carry

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mandatory minimum sentence of 50 years and a maximum of life.

Maduro is currently in Venezuela. But he may travel outside of Venezuela, and if anyone is aware of such travel, the State Department is offering up to fifteen million dollars for information leading to his arrest and/or conviction.

Maduro's three Cartel co-conspirators, Cliver Alcala, Diosdado Cabello and Hugo Carvajal are at large and have rewards of up to 10 million for their arrest and/or conviction.

Cabello is the President of Venezuela's Constituent Assembly as well as a current military officer, and one of Maduro's top lieutenants in the Cartel. Cabello has personally coordinated large cocaine shipments for the Cartel, and helped deliver rocket launchers to the FARC.

Carvajal used to be the head of Venezuelan military intelligence. He is a key Cartel operative who worked with Maduro and Cabello to facilitate cocaine shipments.

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Alcala is a former Venezuelan general who operated near the Colombian border as an intermediary between the FARC and the Cartel.

These members the Cartel, led by Nicolas Maduro, now stand indicted for using their political and military power to promote narco-terrorism for their personal gain and to the great detriment of the people of Venezuela.

This case took many years to build, and I want to thank the DEA's Special Operations Division. I also want to thank the DEA's Miami Field Division, Homeland Security Investigations, and the State Department for its efforts in connection with the Narcotics Rewards Program incentives announced today.

I also want to commend the prosecutors handling the case from my Office, Amanda Houle, Matt Laroche, Jason Richman, and Kyle Wirshba, and their supervisors, Emil Bove and Shawn Crowley, the chiefs of the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit.