



Department of Justice

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“OPERATION RAINMAKER” RESULTS IN DRUG AND MONEY LAUNDERING ARRESTS AND SEIZURES

Atlanta, GA - “Operation Rainmaker,” a major multi-national federal drug and money laundering investigation, has culminated in a series of arrests in the United States, Colombia and Puerto Rico. During the course of the investigation over \$7.5 million in alleged drug proceeds, more than 24 kilograms of cocaine and over 2 kilograms of heroin were seized.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of Operation Rainmaker, “A key element in drug investigations is following the money. In this cooperative investigation with ICE and IRS, hard work by many agents resulted in a clear picture of significant amounts of allegedly drug-derived money and where it was going. Just like illegal drugs, the dirty money goes all over the world, and we will make every effort to get the drugs and the cash as well as the criminals.”

In Washington D.C., Julie L. Myers, Assistant Secretary for Immigration & Customs Enforcement, (ICE) U.S. Department of Homeland Security, said: “The Black Market Peso Exchange blurs the line between crime and commerce, using global trade to mask international money laundering. This investigation demonstrates what can be achieved when law enforcement agencies at home and abroad work together to target this sophisticated form of money laundering.” In Atlanta, ICE Special Agent In Charge Kenneth A. Smith said of the case, “This investigation demonstrates what can be achieved when law enforcement agencies at home and abroad work together to target the flow of illegal drug proceeds from the streets of U.S. cities to Colombia and other nations.”

Rebecca A. Sparkman, Special Agent In Charge, Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation, Atlanta said, “IRS Criminal Investigation, together with other members of the law enforcement community, is united in our resolve to financially disrupt criminal organizations that commit crimes against society and the world economy.”

According to U.S. Attorney Nahmias and information presented in court: Beginning in August 2003, ICE-Atlanta initiated a multi-national, multi-agency

investigation into a money laundering and drug trafficking organization. This investigation was designated Operation Rainmaker. This organization allegedly laundered drug proceeds in several ways through what is known as the Black Market Peso Exchange. The organization arranged for drug proceeds in the form of U.S. dollars to be picked up in numerous places, including New York City; Brockton, Massachusetts; Atlanta; Philadelphia; and Puerto Rico. Following the pick-up of U.S. currency, an equivalent amount of Colombian pesos was delivered to the organization in Colombia. In some instances, following the money pick-ups, the U.S. dollars, less a commission, were wire transferred into bank accounts in the United States and elsewhere, as instructed by the organization.

Thirty individuals have been indicted by a federal grand jury in Atlanta for their participation in the scheme. The defendants are currently charged with conspiring to launder drug proceeds, conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, and various other money laundering charges. They face potential penalties of up to life imprisonment. Eight of the defendants indicted in Atlanta were arrested by Colombian authorities in Colombia, South America, on Monday and Tuesday of this week. The United States will seek their extradition. 16 of the remaining 22 defendants were arrested in the United States and Puerto Rico today or were already in custody.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment contains only allegations. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

For further information, please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.