



Department of Justice

United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton
Middle District of Florida

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MIAMI, FLORIDA AND CALI, COLOMBIA RESIDENT CONVICTED OF COCAINE CHARGES

Tampa, FL – Today, United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton announced the conviction of IVAN GONZALEZ-BEJARANO, a/k/a “Flaco,” a/k/a “Omar,” a/k/a “Marino,” a/k/a “Don Ruben,” a/k/a “El Vicino,” age 48, following a two-week trial in United States District Court before the Honorable Steven D. Merryday. Gonzalez-Bejarano faces maximum sentence of ten years’ to life imprisonment and a fine of \$4 million. A sentencing date has not been set.

The indictment charged conspiracy to import over five (5) kilograms of cocaine, conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute over five (5) kilograms of cocaine, possession with intent to distribute over five (5) kilograms of cocaine, and importation of over five (5) kilograms of cocaine.

During the trial, approximately 30 witnesses testified that for at least the last 20 years, Gonzalez-Bejarano engaged in the smuggling and distribution of cocaine while in the United States and Colombia. The jury heard testimony that Gonzalez-Bejarano headed an organization that smuggled in excess of 28,600 kilograms of cocaine into the United States, which had a wholesale value well in excess of half a billion dollars.

The investigation was the result of a multi-year investigation by the Panama Express South Strike Force. Panama Express Strike Force South (PANEX) is a federally approved Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) consisting of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration, United States Coast Guard, Internal Revenue Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Joint Interagency Task Force. Operation Panama Express South currently targets Colombian maritime smuggling organizations responsible for cocaine trafficking throughout the Eastern Pacific Ocean for distribution in the United States and elsewhere.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Walter E. Furr, III.