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**DRUG DEALERS FROM LOS ANGELES SENTENCED TO 45 AND 40 YEARS**

***Defendants Distributed Over 600 Kilograms of Cocaine in the Baltimore Area***

BALTIMORE, Maryland - United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein announces that today U.S. District Court Judge William D. Quarles, Jr. sentenced Jose Jesus Gutierrez, age 31, of Los Angeles, California to 40 years in prison followed by five years of supervised release for conspiracy to import and distribute cocaine and marijuana. Yesterday, Judge Quarles sentenced co-defendant Laurencio Gonzalez, age 36, also of Los Angeles, to 45 years in prison followed by five years of supervised release on the same charges.

“Criminals who import drugs into the United States and market them in Maryland are promoting drug dependency among our citizens and fueling violence in our streets,” said United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein. “The lengthy sentences will put these drug dealers out of business and send a powerful message to other people who manage criminal enterprises.”

Trial testimony established that between December of 2002 and August of 2003, Gonzalez and Gutierrez distributed over 600 kilograms of cocaine in the Baltimore area. Gutierrez recruited and managed couriers who transported the cocaine in vehicles from Los Angeles to Baltimore, collected money from customers in Maryland and elsewhere, and carried millions of dollars of drug proceeds back to Los Angeles and on to Tijuana, Mexico. On May 25, 2005, after a one week trial, Gutierrez and Gonzalez were convicted of conspiring to import large quantities of cocaine from Mexico into the United States.

Trial testimony further established that Gonzalez maintained direct contact with high-level members of a Tijuana, Mexico drug cartel, discussing and receiving instructions on price, quantity and delivery schedules. Other co-conspirators could not change price and payment terms without the approval of Gonzalez. Drug customers who wished to purchase two hundred kilograms or more of cocaine were required to permit cartel members to meet the customer’s family and would also have to travel to Tijuana to meet the bosses. This requirement was designed to use the customer’s

family as collateral in the event large debts were not promptly paid.

Prior to trial, several co-defendants entered guilty pleas to conspiracy to import cocaine and marijuana. Alfredo Garabito, age 39, of Los Angeles, was sentenced to 10 years in prison. Jose Mendoza, age 35, of Los Angeles, was sentenced to 13 years. Raul Del Real, age 37, of Whittier, California was sentenced to 15 years. Pedro Flores, age 28, of Los Angeles, was sentenced to 10 years and Albert Del Real, age 38, of Whittier, California was sentenced to 42 months in prison. Defendant Victor Jimines, age 26, of Los Angeles, remains a fugitive.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Baltimore and Los Angeles, as well as the High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (“HIDTA”) Task Force in Los Angeles, for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein also praised Assistant United States Attorneys James G. Warwick and Jefferson M. Gray, who prosecuted the case.