

NEWS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

COLOMBIAN MONEY LAUNDERER EXTRADITED FROM TRINIDAD

NEWS RELEASE SUMMARY - April 28, 2008

United States Attorney Karen P. Hewitt announced that Jorge Hernan Ospina-Zuluaga, charged as Hernan Ospina, appeared before Magistrate Judge Nita L. Stormes in San Diego today and was arraigned on an indictment handed up on March 23, 1995, charging Ospina with conspiracy to launder drug trafficking proceeds and money laundering.

At the time of the indictment, the Government did not have an extradition treaty in place with Colombia regarding the offenses charged against Ospina, a resident of Bogota, Colombia. However, Ospina was traveling in Trinidad and was arrested on the outstanding warrant on December 3, 2007, and was subsequently extradited from Trinidad and Tobago to the United States of America.

The indictment describes Ospina as an individual “who controlled and directed organizations that sold cocaine and other narcotic and dangerous drugs to various buyers in the United States and received currency of the United States in payment therefor (drug proceeds).” The indictment also identified Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) special agents operating a “front” business dealing with Ospina, who would then direct specific transfers of funds to various banks on behalf of his drug trafficking clients.

United States Attorney Hewitt said that the indictment charges Ospina with laundering approximately five and one-half million dollars derived from the drug trafficking organization’s sale of cocaine in various cities in the United States.

“The extradition and indictment of Jorge Hernan Ospina-Zuluaga is an important step toward ensuring accountability of those who assist drug trafficking organizations. A trusted money launderer for the Colombian cartels, Jorge Hernan Ospina-Zuluaga, was responsible for laundering millions of dollars each month on their behalf. Ospina-Zuluaga’s indictment is the result of a three-year, undercover money laundering investigation, “Operation Green Ice,” which began in 1993. After 13 years as a fugitive it is finally time for Mr. Ospina-Zuluaga to face justice and pay his debt to society,” said DEA Special Agent in Charge Ralph W. Partridge.

According to Assistant U.S. Attorney Edward C. Weiner, who is handling the prosecution, DEA agents in Port of Spain, Trinidad, became aware of Ospina’s entry into the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and facilitated the provisional arrest of Ospina while the formal extradition documents were processed through the Office of International Affairs of the Department of Justice and the Department of State. Thereafter, Ospina was certified by a Trinidad court pursuant to our extradition treaty.

United States Attorney Hewitt praised the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) for the coordinated team effort in the culmination of this investigation. The OCDETF program was created to consolidate and utilize all law enforcement resources in this country’s battle against major drug trafficking.

Ospina is next scheduled to be in court on May 1, 2008, for a detention hearing before Magistrate Judge Stormes and on June 6, 2008 for motions hearing before United States District Court Judge Barry Ted Moskowitz.

DEFENDANT

Case Number: 95cr0378-BTM

Jorge Hernan Ospina-Zuluaga (charged as Hernan Ospina)

SUMMARY OF CHARGES

Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956(h) and Title 18, United States Code, Section 1956(a)(1)(B) - Conspiracy to Launder Money and Money Laundering (32 counts)
Maximum penalties: 20 years in custody, \$250,000 fine, Criminal Forfeiture (each count)

INVESTIGATING AGENCIES

Drug Enforcement Administration/Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force

An indictment itself is not evidence that the defendant committed the crimes charged. The defendant is presumed innocent until the Government meets its burden in court of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.