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## **TWO MEN PLEAD GUILTY TO CONSPIRING TO SUPPORT THE FARC**

WASHINGTON – Two South American men have pleaded guilty to conspiring to provide material support to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, a designated foreign terrorist organization, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and Assistant Attorney General Kenneth L. Wainstein of the National Security Division announced today.

Julio Cesar Lopez (Lopez), 62, of Caracas, Venezuela, and Luis Alfredo Daza Morales (Daza), 47, of Bogota, Colombia, pleaded guilty yesterday in Miami before U.S. District Judge Joan A. Lenard to conspiracy to provide material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization.

The men were arrested after working with U.S. government undercover informants who, as part of a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) sting operation, posed as FARC operatives seeking illicit travel to Miami to launder FARC money from the United States to Colombia for the purchase of FARC weapons and drugs.

Lopez admitted that between Nov. 10, 2005, and Jan. 3, 2006, he offered to act as a financial advisor for the FARC. Lopez engineered schemes to launder up to \$1 million of FARC money per day through contributions to a charitable organization and shell businesses in the United States. He also offered means of obtaining weapons abroad in exchange for publicly-held stock shares bought in the United States.

To demonstrate his ability to launder money effectively, Lopez facilitated a \$50,000 money transfer in Miami with cash payout in Bogota for the informants he believed were working on behalf of the FARC. As part of the scheme, Lopez directed an informant in the United States to deliver the bulk of the \$50,000 to his money courier in Miami and to make two \$9,000 deposits into a private bank account. Through a substitute debt-payment scheme involving international businesses, Lopez arranged for that money, minus his commissions, to be made available to the informant's FARC associates in Colombia.

While Lopez developed schemes to launder FARC money, Daza admitted that between Sept. 27, 2005, and Jan. 3, 2006, he conspired to help smuggle individuals he believed to be FARC operatives to the United States by providing clandestine passage through Bogota's El Dorado International Airport. Claiming to be a veteran of Colombia's Department of Administrative Security (DAS), a Colombian law enforcement agency, Daza sought to arrange

an entire team of DAS airport immigration officials to facilitate the travelers' passage through the El Dorado International Airport, a service he claimed to have provided in the past.

Daza also researched whether the travelers' false passports or names had been flagged by Interpol. He picked the informants' travel dates and instructed them on which immigration checkpoint to use and where to wait in the terminal in order to avoid airport surveillance. Furthermore, he outlined a contingency plan in the event the travelers were stopped by legitimate law enforcement authorities on the way through the airport.

"These defendants admitted to helping persons, whom they thought were FARC terrorists, enter the United States to engage in money laundering and terrorist financing activities," said Assistant Attorney General Fisher. "We remain vigilant in our prosecution of such crimes, which make the citizens of both the United States and Colombia more vulnerable to terrorism."

"This case illustrates the sophisticated tactics that terrorist supporters will use to garner U.S. resources to finance their terrorist causes," said ICE Assistant Secretary Julie L. Myers. "ICE is proud to have worked so successfully with the Department of Justice in this case to protect against the threat presented by terrorist smuggling and terrorist financing."

Lopez and Daza were among two of 10 individuals indicted by a Miami federal grand jury on terrorism, alien smuggling, and money laundering charges on Jan. 3, 2006. Pursuant to U.S. provisional arrest warrants, Lopez and Daza were arrested in February 2006 in Bogota and extradited to South Florida on July 22, 2007, and March 19, 2007, respectively. Trial for the remaining eight defendants is scheduled to begin Jan. 22, 2008.

Lopez and Daza each face up to 15 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Sentencing before Judge Lenard is scheduled for Jan. 4, 2007.

The case was investigated by the Office of the ICE Attache in Bogota, Colombia. Trial Attorney Brian Skaret of the Domestic Security Section of the Department of Justice prosecuted the case. Valuable support was provided by attorneys Thomas Black and Jerry McMillen of the Justice Department's Office of International Affairs, judicial attache in Colombia. The Justice Department's National Security Division provided assistance to the prosecution, and Assistant U.S. Attorney William White of the Southern District of Florida served as local counsel on the case.

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