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**COLOMBIAN NATIONAL SENTENCED TO PRISON
FOR TRYING TO BRIBE IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS**

NEWARK, N.J. – A Colombian national whose U.S. residency application was denied for containing fraudulent information was sentenced today to 27 months in prison for promising \$30,000 in bribes to immigration officials in an attempt to stay in the country and secure a work permit, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Byron Zabala, a/k/a “Bairon Zabala Torres,” 46, of Blairstown, N.J., previously pleaded guilty to an Indictment charging him with offering or giving a bribe payment in exchange for official action. Zabala entered his guilty plea before U.S. District Judge Jose L. Linares after withdrawing an insanity defense. He has been detained since his arrest on August 8, 2011. Judge Linares imposed the sentence today in Newark federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and statements in court:

After Zabala’s application – known as an “Application For Permission to Reapply for Admission Into the United States after Deportation or Removal” – had been denied by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in March 2011, Zabala sent an email to a USCIS employee (“Employee 1”) at the Newark office. Zabala admitted that the email, sent to the employee’s DHS email address on June 6, 2011, stated, “In the event you were able to reverse the decision and issue my residency card, I would like to reward you with a gift of \$10,000.”

Zabala also admitted that within days, he sent an email to Employee 1 increasing the offer to \$20,000. On July 2, 2011, Zabala sent another email to the employee offering another \$10,000 on top of the \$20,000 already offered “to get the residency card and to get back to work.” Zabala previously had been employed as a commercial pilot.

Later that month, Employee 1 put Zabala in contact with someone Zabala thought was another USCIS employee in the Newark office (“Employee 2”), but actually was employed by DHS, Office of Inspector General, in an undercover capacity. On July 18, 2011, Zabala sent an email to Employee 2 at a DHS email address agreeing to complete a new set of applications related to his residency and stating that he would bring these applications along with half of the \$30,000 promised payment to Employee 2. Zabala believed that Employees 1 and 2 would split the bribe. Zabala met Employee 2 at a restaurant in Newark on August 5, 2011, where he provided Employee 2 with newly completed immigration application forms and a bank check in the amount of \$15,000, made out to Employee 2.

In addition to the prison term, Judge Linares sentenced Zabala to two years of supervised

release and ordered him to forfeit \$30,000.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of the DHS's Office of Inspector General New York Field Office, under the direction of Gregory K. Null, Special Agent in Charge, Northeast, for the investigation leading to today's sentencing. He also thanked USCIS for its important role.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Sandra L. Moser of the U.S. Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Division in Newark.

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Defense counsel: Michael Orozco Esq., Newark