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NEW INDICTMENT CHARGES LEADERS OF COLOMBIA'S NOTORIOUS CALI CARTEL WITH CONTINUING GLOBAL DRUG BUSINESS FROM PRISON

MIAMI, FLA. – Jesus Torres, Interim Special Agent in Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Miami, Marcos Jimenez, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, and Thomas Raffanello, the Special Agent-in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in Miami, today announced the indictment of eleven individuals in Colombia in connection with new charges against the leaders of Colombia's Cali drug cartel and several key associates.

This morning, and over the past weekend, officers from the Colombian Judicial Police (a division of the Colombian National Police) working with ICE agents in Colombia, arrested three, and took one other into custody pending positive identification, accused drug traffickers in Colombia based upon provisional U.S. arrest warrants stemming from a September 28, 2003 sealed indictment returned by a federal grand jury in the Southern District of Florida. The indictment was unsealed this morning. The U.S. government will seek extradition of each of the defendants to the United States, including the cartel leaders.

The indictment charges 11 defendants, including two of the founding members of the infamous Cali drug cartel, brothers **Miguel Rodriguez-Orejuela** and **Gilberto Rodriguez-Orejuela**. The indictment spells out three general areas of alleged criminal conduct: 1) **narcotics trafficking**, charged as conspiracy to import and conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute, 2) **money laundering** and the related investment of **\$2.1 billion** worth of drug proceeds in Colombia, and 3) conspiracy to obstruct justice through **multiple murders** and **payoffs** to individuals and their families to keep them from cooperating with authorities.

The indictment alleges that Miguel and Gilberto, who were jailed in Colombia in June and August 1995 after a massive probe by U.S. and Colombian authorities, continued their illegal activities from prison. At the time of their arrests in 1995, the brothers and their cartel were believed to be the source of 80 percent of the cocaine shipped to the United States. After their jailing, according to the indictment, the brothers were assisted by several key associates in maintaining a significant drug and money laundering operation.

“Narco-traffickers present clear and obvious threats to homeland security, importing drugs and violence to American streets. This multi-year investigation sends a clear message: ICE agents will go after you anywhere in the world. Prison is no safe haven. I am extremely proud of the ICE agents who worked tirelessly on this case with their domestic and Colombian law enforcement partners. For more than a decade, they have fully devoted themselves to dismantling one of the world’s largest and most sophisticated criminal organizations,” said ICE Assistant Secretary Michael J. Garcia.

Roger P. Mackin, the Department of Homeland Security’s Counternarcotics Officer, said, “A decade ago, the Rodriguez brothers were at the top of their criminal game. Their drug trafficking empire netted them billions of dollars. They owned vast properties and exercised great influence. They were the Colombian ‘untouchables.’ Now, because of the commitment of Colombian President Uribe to work with U.S. law enforcement, they are awaiting extradition to America to pay for their crimes.”

Mr. Marcos Jimenez, U.S. Attorney for Southern District of Florida said, “This indictment is the culmination of a long-term and detailed investigation of narcotics trafficking at the very highest levels in the world. These individuals are charged with trafficking thousands of tons of cocaine, generating billions of dollars of profits and protecting that illicit trade through the obstruction of justice. We will continue to seek out organizers and other major narco-trafficking targets no matter where they are or how long it takes to bring them to justice.”

Thomas W. Raffanello, Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent in Charge for Miami said, “We have learned over the years that persistence is the key ingredient in bringing drug kingpins to justice. The indictment of these Cali cartel leaders, who were responsible for the destruction of thousands of lives worldwide, makes all the sacrifice worthwhile. The strong alliance of the US and Colombian law enforcement sends a chilling to major drug trafficking organizations in Colombia and throughout the world.”

The arrests in Colombia and the indictment announced today represent the latest phase of a long-term investigation into the Cali drug cartel that began in 1991. The first phase of investigation was conducted by ICE agents, with the assistance of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) under the auspices of the Office of National Drug Control Policy’s High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) initiative and the Justice Department’s Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) initiative.

Launched after the 1991 seizure of 12,250 kilograms of cocaine hidden in concrete fence posts in Miami, the original investigation lasted roughly four years and resulted in two voluminous federal indictments in the Southern District of Florida in June 1995 and June 1996. These indictments charged a total of 130 defendants, including the-then four leaders of the Cali drug cartel: the Rodriguez-Orejuela brothers, Jose Santacruz Londono, and Helmer “Pacho” Herrera-Buitrago, with racketeering and a host of federal drug crimes.

Also charged in the original 1995-1996 indictments were six attorneys from the United States as well as Cali cartel managers in several U.S. cities and other nations. These charges ultimately led to the apprehension, conviction, and jailing of most of the Cali cartel leadership in the United States and Colombia in the late 1990s. In total, the case resulted in the arrest of more than 100 defendants and the seizure of more than 47,000 kilograms of cocaine and at least \$15 million.

After several years of trials resulting from the original case, ICE agents began receiving new information in 2001 indicating that the remaining members of the Cali cartel were back in business from jail and regaining a foothold in the cocaine market through new trafficking routes. Working closely with their counterparts in the Colombian National Police and the DEA, ICE agents began working on a new case. The resulting indictment unsealed today draws in part from new evidence gathered from December 1997 through July 2002.

Those charged in the indictment are:

1. **Miguel Rodriguez-Orejuela**, is the younger of the Rodriguez brothers and a leader of the Cali cartel. He was apprehended and jailed in Colombia in August 1995.
2. **Gilberto Rodriguez-Orejuela**, known as the “chess player,” is the elder of the Rodriguez brothers and a leader of the Cali cartel. He was apprehend and jailed in Colombia in June 1995.
3. **William Rodriguez-Abadia** is the eldest son of Miguel Rodriguez-Orejuela. According to the indictment, he has controlled the daily activities of the Cali cartel since the jailing of his father and uncle in 1995.
4. **Luis Eduardo Cuartas-Pardo** – According to the indictment, he has served as chief accountant for the Cali cartel, taking over in 1995 after his predecessor was jailed.
5. **Guillermo Restrepo-Lara** – According to the indictment, he has served as the chief enforcer for the Cali cartel.
6. **Heriberto Patino-Rios** – According to the indictment, he has served as a drug transportation supervisor for the Cali cartel.
7. **Luis Ocampo-Fomeque** – According to the indictment, he has served as a drug transportation supervisor for the Cali cartel.
8. **German Navarro** – According to the indictment, he is a Colombian lawyer who delivered messages for the imprisoned Rodriguez and coordinated bribery efforts.
9. **Daniel Serrano** – According to the indictment, he was a money supervisor for the Rodriguez brothers and was active in the payment of bribes.
10. **Harold Velez-Restrepo** – According to the indictment, he helped purchase residences, offices, and facilities for the Cali cartel members.
11. **Luis Evelio-Restrepo** – According to the indictment, he oversaw “stash houses” for cartel members.

Arrested are:

- 1. Miguel Rodriguez-Orejuela**, is the younger of the Rodriguez brothers and a leader of the Cali cartel. He was apprehended and jailed in Colombia in August 1995.
- 2. Gilberto Rodriguez-Orejuela**, known as the “chess player,” is the elder of the Rodriguez brothers and a leader of the Cali cartel. He was apprehend and jailed in Colombia in June 1995.
- 3. Luis Eduardo Cuartas-Pardo** – According to the indictment, he has served as chief accountant for the Cali cartel, taking over in 1995 after his predecessor was jailed.
- 4.** A fourth person is in custody pending positive identification.