

20 indicted in Massachusetts drug, money laundering organization; \$90 million of cocaine seized

“Over a dozen individuals located in Colombia, Jamaica and Florida have been indicted in Boston, Mass. in connection with their alleged involvement in a sophisticated international money laundering organization that laundered more than \$6 million in drug trafficking proceeds from Colombian cartels through the United States, Caribbean and European banking systems.

\$1 million was seized from corporate bank accounts and other investigative activity. Nearly 3,000 kilograms of cocaine – with a street value of over \$90 million – has allegedly been traced back to the money laundering organization. This includes approximately 1,193 kilograms of cocaine seized at sea, 60 miles south of Jamaica, in July 2019, as well as 1,555 kilograms of cocaine seized in nine scrap metal shipping containers at the Port of Buenaventura, Colombia, in March 2019.

This morning, three defendants were arrested in Florida and will make an initial appearance in federal court in the Southern District of Florida at a later date. Two defendants were also arrested this morning in Jamaica at the request of the United States. One defendant remains at large in Jamaica. On April 26, 2022, 12 defendants were arrested in Colombia by local authorities at the request of the United States and one defendant was arrested in Orlando, Fla. The United States will seek the extradition of the Colombian and Jamaican defendants to the District of Massachusetts.

According to the charging documents, in or about October 2016, law enforcement began an investigation into a sophisticated money laundering organization located primarily in Barranquilla, Colombia. During an extensive five-year investigation, the organization allegedly laundered over \$6 million in drug proceeds through intermediary banks in the United States, including banks in Massachusetts, as well as additional proceeds through banks in the Caribbean and Europe by use of the Colombian Black Market Peso Exchange (BMPE). It is alleged that, by using the BMPE, the defendants conspired to conceal drug trafficking activity and proceeds from law enforcement as well as evade currency exchange requirements in the United States and Colombia through the illegal currency exchange process. As part of the conspiracy, the defendants allegedly held roles and responsibilities within the money laundering organization relative to the needs and opportunities of the scheme, such as drug suppliers, peso brokers, money couriers and business owners/dollar purchasers.

According to the charging documents, through the BMPE, Colombian drug trafficking organizations with drug proceeds generated in the United States use third parties – generally referred to as “peso brokers” that are also based in Colombia – who agree to exchange Colombian pesos they control for the drug supplier’s dollar proceeds. Peso brokers then use money couriers in the United States and elsewhere to physically secure the drug proceeds, often in suitcases or bags on the street, and transfer the proceeds into the United States banking system. To avoid detection, peso brokers deposit the drug proceeds into bank accounts in company or individual names intended to appear as legitimate business activity, or through multiple small deposits into different bank accounts which are then consolidated into larger accounts. As a result, Colombian peso brokers control a pool of drug-derived proceeds in United States bank accounts. These dollar proceeds are then purchased by individuals or companies in Colombia seeking to exchange pesos for United States dollars at a favorable

exchange rate and in a manner that avoids currency exchange and income reporting requirements. The dollar drug proceeds are transferred at the direction of the purchaser, and often end up in bank accounts of individuals or companies who appear to have no direct involvement in drug trafficking crimes.

The charges of money laundering conspiracy and laundering of monetary instruments each provide for a sentence of up to 20 years in prison, up to three years of supervised release and a fine of up to \$500,000, or twice the amount involved, whichever is greater. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge based upon the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and statutes which govern the determination of a sentence in a criminal case.

United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins; Brian D. Boyle, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Boston Field Division; Joleen D. Simpson, Special Agent in Charge of the Internal Revenue Service's Criminal Investigations in Boston; Luz Angela Bahamon Flórez, Delegate for Criminal Finance for the Colombian Attorney General's Office; Ricardo Augusto Alarcon Campos, Major General of the Colombian National Police, Anti-Narcotics Directorate; Jervis Moore, Chief of the Narcotics Division for the Jamaica Constabulary Force; and Colonel Christopher Mason, Superintendent of the Massachusetts State Police made the announcement today. The Justice Department's Office of International Affairs and the Criminal Division's Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section (NDDS) Judicial Attachés in Bogotá, Colombia provided significant assistance in securing the arrests in Colombia and Jamaica. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jared C. Dolan and Alatheia E. Porter of Rollins' Narcotics & Money Laundering Unit are prosecuting the case.

The details contained in the charging documents are allegations. The defendants are presumed to be innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The following defendants have been indicted:

01: Argiro De Jesus Velasquez-Velasquez, a/k/a "El Viejo" [Drug supplier (Colombia)]

02: Jose Fernando Sanchez-Villanueva, a/k/a "Picapiedra" [Drug supplier (Colombia)]

03: Oscar Ivan Rodriguez-Camargo, a/k/a "El Mono" [Peso broker (Colombia)]

04: Willian Faustino Acosta-Calderin [Business owner (Colombia)]

05: Manuel Calderin-Calderin [Business owner (Colombia)]

06: German Millan-Padilla [Peso broker (Colombia)]

07: Abdul Mauricio Harb-Gomez [Peso broker (Colombia)]

08: Andres Rached Farah, a/k/a/ "Don Andres," a/k/a "El Turco" [Peso broker (Colombia)]

09: Fernando Carlos Pertuz-Herrera [Money courier (Colombia)]

10: Yimmy Rafael Sanchez-Jimenez, a/k/a "El Chiqui" [Peso broker (Colombia)]

11: Jaime Humberto Mejia-Bencardino [Peso broker (Colombia)]

12: Jose Aliro Abril-Sequera [Business owner (Colombia)]

13: Harold Antonio Ayala-Pinedo [Business owner (Colombia)]

14: St. Devon Anthony Cover [Money courier (Jamaica)]

15: Dennis Raymond Rowe [Money courier (Jamaica)]

16: Seivright Donald Afflick [Money courier (Jamaica)]

17: Robert Hueton Colespring [Money courier (Florida)]

18: Kimali St. George Myers [Money courier (Florida)]

19: Dawnett Rochelle Mcgee [Money courier (Florida)]

20: REDACTED [REDACTED]." -Massachusetts Department of Justice.