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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE;
Alleged Mexican Drug Cartel Leader Extradited from Mexico to United States to Face Federal Drug-Trafficking Charges

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An allegedly high-ranking leader of one of Mexico's largest drug cartels, whose father allegedly heads a faction of the Sinaloa Cartel and is among Mexico's most powerful drug kingpins, was extradited today from Mexico to face federal narcotics trafficking conspiracy charges in the United States. Jesus Vicente Zambada-Niebla is believed to be one of the most significant Mexican drug defendants extradited from Mexico to the United States since Osiel Cardenas Guillen, the accused leader of the notorious Gulf Cartel, was extradited in 2007. Today's development is a result of the continuing close cooperation between the United States and Mexico to investigate and prosecute the leaders of international drug-trafficking cartels (see also [U.S. Department of Justice](#)).

Zambada-Niebla, 34, who spent approximately 11 months in custody in Mexico, arrived in Chicago after Mexican authorities surrendered him earlier today to U.S. law enforcement agents. He is scheduled to be arraigned Tuesday, February 23 at 11:00 a.m. CST before U.S. District Judge Ruben Castillo in U.S. District Court in Chicago.

Zambada-Niebla was among three dozen defendants who were indicted in Chicago in August 2009 as part of the largest international narcotics conspiracy case ever prosecuted in the Northern District of Illinois. He is also under indictment in a separate case pending in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, which is being prosecuted by the Criminal Division's Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section. Zambada-Niebla will first face the charges against him in Chicago and then he will face charges in the District of Columbia.

"Through close and sustained cooperation with our partners in Mexico, we are bringing alleged cartel leaders to justice - on both sides of the border," said Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Criminal Division. "In 2009, Mexico extradited the most defendants ever to the United States in one year, representing our shared commitment and responsibility for disrupting and dismantling these violent and corrosive drug-trafficking organizations."

"We praise Mexico for continuing to extradite Mexican cartel leaders to the United States," said Michele M. Leonhart, Acting Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration. "The Sinaloa Cartel has smuggled multi-ton quantities of cocaine and heroin into our country for decades, using intimidation and murder to build and protect their criminal empire. This extradition clearly illustrates the will of the Mexican Government to continue a strong partnership with DEA to target, disrupt and dismantle the powerful Mexican cartels."

"This is an extremely significant development in the United States' effort to prosecute international drug importation conspiracies wherever the defendants may be operating," said Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. "The indictment alleges that this organization imported many tons of cocaine and quantities of heroin into the United States, and that this defendant played a central role as a high-ranking member of the alleged conspiracy."

Zambada-Niebla was indicted in Chicago together with Joaquin "el Chapo" Guzman-Loera and Zambada-Niebla's father, Ismael "el Mayo" Zambada-Garcia, both of whom allegedly directed factions of the Sinaloa Cartel. These factions allegedly coordinated narcotics trafficking with each other, with other Sinaloa Cartel factions, and with other affiliated cartels in an alliance commonly known as "the Federation." The Chicago indictment charges crimes that allegedly occurred between 2005 and 2008, while Guzman-Loera, Zambada-Garcia and Arturo Beltran-Leyva were indicted separately in Brooklyn, N.Y., for alleged drug-trafficking activities between 1990 and 2005. Beltran-Leyva was killed in a stand-off with Mexican authorities in December 2009 in Mexico.

The Chicago indictment charges that Zambada-Garcia and Guzman-Loera, together with seven other high-ranking associates, including their respective sons, Zambada-Niebla and Alfredo Guzman-Salazar, coordinated their narcotics trafficking activities to import multi-ton quantities of cocaine from Central and South American countries, including Colombia and Panama, to the interior of Mexico, using various means of transportation. Then, they allegedly smuggled hundreds of kilograms of cocaine at a time, as well as multi-kilograms of heroin, across the U.S. border to Chicago and throughout the United States.

According to the indictment, Guzman-Loera, Zambada-Garcia, and Zambada-Niebla sought to obtain weapons in the United States and discussed using violence against American and/or Mexican⁸⁸ government buildings in retaliation for each country's enforcement of its narcotics laws and to perpetuate their narcotics trafficking activities.

The District of Columbia indictment charges Zambada-Niebla and his co-defendants with conspiracy to import and distribute cocaine from 1992 until Jan. 28, 2003. According to the indictment, the Zambada-Garcia organization received multi-ton quantities of Colombian cocaine through maritime shipping vessels and then used various means, including planes, trucks and cars, to transport the cocaine across the U.S.-Mexico border. The indictment specifically alleges that the Zambada-Garcia organization distributed cocaine to Los Angeles, Chicago and New York, including 1,003 kilograms of cocaine to the New York/New Jersey area, 1,770 kilograms of cocaine to the Chicago area, and 2-3 kilograms of cocaine to the Los Angeles area. The total estimated value of this cocaine, all of which was allegedly distributed between August 2001 and June 2002, is \$47.5 million. In all, the District of Columbia indictment alleges that Zambada-Niebla and his co-defendants transported approximately 12,500 kilograms of cocaine from Colombia through Mexico and into the United States.

The DEA led the investigation in Chicago, together with the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division and the Chicago Police Department. Also assisting in the overall investigation were DEA's National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC); the High-Intensity Drug

Trafficking Area (HIDTA) task force; the U.S. Attorney's Office in Milwaukee and the Milwaukee Police Department; the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of Illinois; the Chicago and Peoria offices of the FBI; the Chicago offices of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Cook County Sheriff's Department and other state and local law enforcement agencies. The investigation was coordinated by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Chicago, and with the assistance of agents and analysts of the Special Operations Division (SOD), and attorneys from the Criminal Division's Narcotic and Dangerous Drug Section (NDDS), which is prosecuting related cases. The Chicago case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Thomas Shakeshaft and Michael Ferrara.

The investigation in the District of Columbia was led by SOD. The District of Columbia case was originally handled by former NDDS Trial Attorney Patrick Hearn and is now being prosecuted by NDDS Trial Attorneys Mary Mogavero and Glenn Alexander.

The Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs provided significant assistance with Zambada-Niebla's extradition.

The department recognizes and appreciates the significant assistance provided by the Government of Mexico and Mexican law enforcement partners in this extradition.

The charges contained in the indictment are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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