



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

Southern District of New York

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INTERNATIONAL ARMS AND NARCOTICS TRAFFICKER PLEADS GUILTY IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT TO NARCO-TERRORISM AND NARCOTICS CHARGES

Defendant Agreed to Provide Military-Grade Weapons to Assist the FARC in Exchange for Cocaine

Preet Bharara, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York announced that PAUL MARDIROSSIAN pled guilty today in Manhattan federal court to five counts stemming from his negotiation of a weapons-for-drugs deal with DEA confidential sources whom he believed to be representatives of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia ("FARC"), a Colombian terrorist group. MARDIROSSIAN, a Swedish citizen, agreed to supply the FARC with military-grade weapons, including rocket-propelled grenade launchers and assault rifles, in exchange for large quantities of cocaine. MARDIROSSIAN pled guilty before U.S. District Judge Jed S. Rakoff.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney Preet Bharara stated: "Paul Mardirossian was ready, willing, and able to supply military grade weapons to people he thought were terrorists for the express purpose of harming Americans. In return, he would receive prodigious quantities of cocaine that would ultimately poison thousands of people and net him huge profits. Today's guilty plea is the latest result of our ongoing efforts to dismantle the inter-connected networks of drug dealers and arms suppliers."

According to the Superseding Indictment and statements made during today's plea proceeding:

Beginning in February 2010, MARDIROSSIAN had a series of meetings in countries including Spain and Panama with a DEA confidential source (the "CS") who represented himself as an associate of the FARC. During those meetings, and in telephone calls and e-mail messages, MARDIROSSIAN agreed to arrange the sale of military-grade weaponry to the FARC, including AK-47 assault rifles, grenade launchers, and ammunition, in exchange for large quantities of cocaine. MARDIROSSIAN and the CS agreed that he would provide a weapons sample, and later, a larger quantity of weapons for the FARC.

During a meeting in January 2011 in Panama City, Panama, the CS and a second DEA confidential source, who purported to be a senior member of the FARC, informed MARDIROSSIAN and a co-conspirator that the weapons were needed to attack a U.S. military base that was currently under construction. The following day, MARDIROSSIAN and his co-conspirator traveled outside Panama City with the CS to inspect 50 kilograms of cocaine

comparable in quality to the cocaine that he would receive as payment for the weapons. In a related transaction, MARDIROSSIAN later wired \$20,000 to an undercover bank account in Manhattan, in order to invest in what the CS represented to be a shipment of cocaine destined for New York.

For several months following the January 2011 meeting, MARDIROSSIAN was in contact with the CS by telephone and e-mail to discuss his efforts to obtain a weapons sample for the FARC. In early April 2011, MARDIROSSIAN coordinated the delivery of that sample – a grenade launcher and AK-47 assault rifle – which were received by an undercover officer in Copenhagen, Denmark.

MARDIROSSIAN was arrested in Panama City, Panama, on April 27, 2011, and turned over to U.S. authorities to face the charges alleged in the Superseding Indictment in the Southern District of New York.

* * *

MARDIROSSIAN, 43, pled guilty to conspiring to engage in narco-terrorism (Count One), conspiring to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization (Count Two), attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization (Count Three), attempting to import five kilograms or more of cocaine into the United States (Count Five), and money laundering (Count Six). The maximum and, in some cases, minimum penalties he faces for these offenses are as follows:

- Count One – life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 20 years in prison;
- Counts Two and Three – 15 years in prison;
- Count Five – life in prison, with a mandatory minimum term of 10 years in prison; and,
- Count Six – 20 years in prison.

MARDIROSSIAN is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Rakoff on May 17, 2012, at 4:30 p.m.

The charges, arrest, and prosecution of the defendant, were the result of the close cooperation and efforts of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York, the Special Operations Division of the DEA, the DEA Copenhagen Country Office, the DEA Madrid Country Office, the DEA Panama Country Office, the DEA Rome Country Office, the U.S. Department of Justice Office of International Affairs and National Security Division, the U.S. Department of State, the government of the Republic of Panama, and the Danish Security and Intelligence Service.

This case is being handled by the Office's Terrorism and International Narcotics Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christian R. Everdell and Adam S. Hickey are in charge of the prosecution.