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Southern District of New York*

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**BELIZEAN DRUG TRAFFICKER WITH TIES TO COLOMBIAN  
TERRORIST GROUP SENTENCED TO OVER 33 YEARS IN  
PRISON FOR TON-QUANTITY COCAINE-IMPORTATION  
CONSPIRACY AND THREATENING TO KILL  
U.S. AGENTS ABROAD**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ROBERT JAMES HERTULAR, a Belizean cocaine trafficker with ties to a Colombian terrorist group, was sentenced this afternoon in Manhattan Federal court to 400 months' imprisonment on charges of threatening to kill Federal agents stationed in Belize and conspiring to import ton-quantities of cocaine into the United States. In addition to the prison sentence, United States District Judge NAOMI REICE BUCHWALD ordered HERTULAR to pay a \$250,000 fine.

In February 2006, HERTULAR was found guilty by a federal jury of all four counts of an Indictment after a trial before the Judge BUCHWALD. Two counts related to HERTULAR's involvement in a conspiracy to import ton-quantities of cocaine into the United States, and two counts related to his threats to kill DEA agents stationed in Belize. According to the evidence at trial:

HERTULAR, 36, was first arrested in Belize in May 2001 after Belizean authorities seized a shipment of 1.1 tons of Colombian cocaine destined for the United States through Mexico. While criminal proceedings were pending in Belize, HERTULAR learned that DEA agents stationed there were investigating his cocaine-trafficking activities. HERTULAR approached the DEA in an effort to provide them with information in exchange for the DEA discontinuing its investigation. When the DEA agents refused, HERTULAR threatened that the organization he worked for would hire hitmen from Colombia and Mexico to kill the agents. The evidence at trial also included testimony about HERTULAR

threatening a Belizean law enforcement officer in 2001, and offering a hand grenade to another Belizean national to be used against DEA agents in April 2003. The other Belizean national turned out to be a DEA informant, who reported HERTULAR's intentions to the U.S. Government.

During meetings with Belizean police and DEA agents in 2001, HERTULAR claimed a drug-trafficking association with notorious paramilitary leader and cocaine trafficker CARLOS CASTANO. (Before his disappearance and presumed murder in April 2004, CASTANO was the head of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia ("AUC"), a right-wing paramilitary group designated by the State Department as a foreign terrorist organization.) HERTULAR also told Belizean officers that he had conducted four other cocaine shipments to the U.S. prior to his arrest in May 2001, each consisting of approximately 1.2 tons.

In January 2004, shortly after he made threats against the DEA agents, HERTULAR was indicted on the federal charges. HERTULAR was arrested in Belize on January 29, 2004, pursuant to a request for extradition made by the U.S. State Department to the Belize Foreign Ministry. On July 22, 2004, after litigation in the Belizean courts, a Belizean Judge granted the United States' request that HERTULAR be extradited to face the charges in the U.S. Indictment. HERTULAR was formally extradited on July 23, 2004, when he was flown to Westchester County Airport in White Plains, New York, in the custody of DEA agents.

Mr. GARCIA praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the DEA New York Drug Enforcement Task Force -- which is comprised of DEA Special Agents, New York Police Department Detectives, and New York State Police Investigators -- the DEA Belize Country Office, and its Mexico-Central America Division, as well as the Belize Police Department and the Belize Department of Public Prosecutions.

Assistant United States Attorneys JESSE FURMAN and ANIRUDH BANSAL are in charge of the prosecution.

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