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**PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AND FORMER
COLOMBIAN DETECTIVE PLEAD GUILTY TO
CONSPIRING TO SUPPORT THE FARC AND ALIEN SMUGGLING**

Seven Convictions To Date Stemming From ICE Sting Operation

WASHINGTON – A Palestinian national and a former detective with the Colombian Department of Administrative Security (DAS) have pleaded guilty to charges of conspiring to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization and alien smuggling, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and Assistant Attorney General Kenneth L. Wainstein of the National Security Division announced today.

Jalal Sadat Moheisen (Sadat), 49, a Palestinian national and resident of Bogota, Colombia, pleaded guilty in Miami before U.S. District Judge Joan A. Lenard to one count of conspiracy to provide material support to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, which is a State Department designated foreign terrorist organization.

Nicolas Ricardo Tapasco Romero (Tapasco), 45, of Bogota, Colombia, also pleaded guilty before Judge Lenard to one count of conspiracy to commit alien smuggling and two counts of bringing aliens to the United States for private financial gain.

Sadat and Tapasco were arrested in Bogota on Jan. 26, 2006, after their participation in a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) sting operation. The two men were extradited to South Florida on Feb. 15, 2007, and Jan. 3, 2007, respectively.

Sadat admitted that between July 2005 and January 2006, he facilitated travel to the United States for three cooperating government informants who posed as FARC operatives. Sadat not only agreed to smuggle the informants to the United States, but upon learning that their mission was to launder \$4-5 million from the U.S. to Colombia, he offered to introduce them to a local emerald salesman who could carry out the transaction.

To facilitate the informants' travel, Sadat made their flight reservations and contracted to provide fraudulent Spanish passports that permit entry into the United States without a visa. To assist the informants in falsely representing themselves as Spaniards, Sadat's co-defendant procured fraudulent Spanish driver's licenses, Spanish identity documents and Spanish trade association cards. Sadat also coordinated inspection-free passage through immigration at the Bogota airport by working with co-defendants Tapasco and Jorge De Los Reyes Bautista

Martinez.

Tapasco, a 10-year DAS veteran detective, formerly assigned to the immigration division, admitted that in November 2005 he facilitated the departure of two cooperating government informants who posed as Colombian nationals seeking to enter the United States with fraudulent Spanish passports. Tapasco reviewed the fake passports, secured fraudulent exit visas and arranged the informants' illicit passage through immigration inspection at the Bogota airport. In particular, Tapasco's coordination led to the informants' clandestine passage around immigration controls after his co-conspirator—a DAS immigration inspector—ushered one informant around immigration inspection booths and led another through a separate passage that bypassed immigration altogether. After the informants passed through security, they boarded flights to Miami and arrived in the United States holding their fraudulent Spanish passports.

Sadat and Tapasco's price to smuggle the informants through the Bogota airport was \$4,000 per traveler. Sadat also accepted more than \$5000 to make flight reservations and obtain the fraudulent Spanish identity documents.

Under the terms of their plea agreements, Sadat and Tapasco face a maximum of 15 years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000. Sentencing before Judge Lenard is scheduled for Jan. 25, 2007.

Sadat and Tapasco are two of 10 individuals indicted by a Miami federal grand jury on terrorism, alien smuggling and money laundering charges on Jan. 3, 2006. To date, five other co-defendants in the case have pleaded guilty. Trial for the remaining defendants is set to begin on Jan. 22, 2008.

The case was investigated by the Office of the ICE Attache in Bogota, Colombia. Trial Attorney Brian Skaret of the Domestic Security Section of the Department of Justice prosecuted the case. Support was provided by the Justice Department's Office of International Affairs' Office of the Judicial Attache in Colombia. The Department's National Security Division provided assistance to the prosecution, and Assistant U.S. Attorney William White of the Southern District of Florida served as local counsel on the case. Valuable support was also provided by Colombian authorities.

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