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Treasury Sanctions Drug Trafficker's Illicit Network in Mexico and Colombia

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) today designated 15 entities and nine individuals as Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers (SDNTs) pursuant to Executive Order 12978. The OFAC designations target the illicit activities and assets of Fabio Enrique Ochoa Vasco (a.k.a. "Juan Carlos Martinez Perez"), a significant Colombian drug trafficker, who was designated as an SDNT principal in 2007. Today's designation action freezes any assets the designees may have that are subject to U.S. jurisdiction and prohibits all financial and commercial transactions by any U.S. person with the designated companies and individuals.

"Our sanctions investigation uncovered an additional network of front companies and trusted financial managers for Fabio Enrique Ochoa Vasco in Colombia, Mexico, and the Caribbean," said OFAC Director Adam J. Szubin. "OFAC's action attacks the financial underpinnings of Ochoa Vasco's drug trafficking empire to deny him and his associates the benefits of these illicit assets."

The additional businesses and individuals designated today are linked to several previously designated members of the Ochoa Vasco network. These SDNTs control a varied network of front companies located throughout Colombia, Mexico, and the Caribbean. Today's OFAC designations expose a Guadalajara-based network of companies controlled by a previously designated key Ochoa Vasco front man, Luis Pacheco Mejia. These Mexican companies include an agricultural company, *Granoproductos Agricolas S.A. de C.V.*, as well as construction and real estate companies such as *Grupo C.L.P. Constructora S.A. de C.V.*, *Grupo Constructor Inmobiliario Pacar S.A. de C.V.*, and *Cimientos La Torre S.A. de C.V.* Also designated in today's action are seven key front companies based in the Colombian cities of Medellin, Envigado, Cali, Girardot, Bogota, Santa Marta, and Barranquilla. These companies include *Parque Ecologico Recreacional de las Aguas de Girardot Limitada*, a large-scale water park in the city of Girardot, and *Mision Inmobiliaria Limitada*, a real estate firm in Bogota. Three offshore shell companies in the British Virgin Islands and Cayman Islands also were designated today.

In addition, today's OFAC action targets several Mexican nationals in Guadalajara, Mexico: Juan Cardenas Real, Jose Luis Lares Rangel, Jorge Octavio Lopez Rodriguez, Mario Antonio Flores Salinas, and Luz del Rocio Arambula Garcia.

These individuals are involved in the management of front companies and are complicit in the money laundering activities of the Ochoa Vasco organization. Key Colombian individuals designated today include Ricardo Espitia Pinilla, a Colombian lawyer who works with Ochoa Vasco criminal operatives. Jose Roberto Bedoya Velez, another Colombian individual designated today, plays a significant role in companies controlled by John Jairo Gallego Valencia, another previously designated SDNT who is the right-hand man of Ochoa Vasco.

Ochoa Vasco began his drug trafficking career in Medellin, Colombia and has been

involved in trafficking narcotics from Colombia to the United States for more than 25 years. During this period, as he climbed the ranks of the growing Medellin drug cartel, his drug trafficking empire has grown into a widespread international network that extends beyond Colombia to Ecuador, Panama, Honduras, Belize, Mexico, and the Caribbean Islands. On March 28, 2007, OFAC designated Ochoa Vasco along with 45 companies and 64 individuals that are part of his extensive criminal and financial network.

Ochoa Vasco was charged with cocaine trafficking and money laundering in a September 2004 indictment in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida. During the past five years, OFAC investigators have worked closely with agents from Operation Panama Express based in Tampa, Florida on the sanctions case against the Ochoa Vasco organization. Operation Panama Express is an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Strike Force investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Internal Revenue Service, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, and the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, along with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida. The investigation was also supported by the DEA Bogota Country Office, ICE-Attaché Bogota, DEA Cartagena, the DEA Mexico City Country Office, and DEA Guadalajara. OFAC would also like to recognize Mexican authorities for their efforts to dismantle the Ochoa Vasco organization.

"ICE cannot allow these dangerous cartels to disguise their illicit activities as legitimate operations in our communities," said John Morton, Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security for ICE. "By OFAC freezing their assets, we continue to shut down the ability of drug kingpins to do business in the United States and abroad."

These designations are part of the ongoing interagency effort by the Department of the Treasury and the Departments of Justice, State, and Homeland Security to implement Executive Order 12978 of October 21, 1995, which applies financial sanctions against Colombia's drug cartels.

For a complete list of the individuals and entities designated today, please visit: <http://www.treasury.gov/offices/enforcement/ofac/actions/index.shtml>.

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REPORTS

- [Ochoa Vasco Financial Network](#)