

A TERRORIST GOES TO PRISON FOR 33 YEARS

On Wednesday, DOJ announced the sentencing of Carlos Mario Jimenez-Naranjo, one of the key leaders in Colombia's AUC terrorist group, to 33 years in prison.

Carlos Mario Jimenez-Naranjo, aka "Macaco," a paramilitary leader and one of Colombia's most notorious drug traffickers, has been sentenced to 33 years in prison by U.S. District Judge Joan A. Lenard in Miami for leading an international drug trafficking conspiracy that supported a foreign terrorist organization, announced Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer of the Justice Department's Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney Wifredo A. Ferrer for the Southern District of Florida.

According to court documents, Jimenez-Naranjo was one of the top leaders of the Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC), a Colombian right-wing paramilitary and drug trafficking organization. The AUC is a U.S. Department of State-designated foreign terrorist organization. From the mid 1990s through 2007, Jimenez-Naranjo led the Bloque Central Bolivar (BCB), a group within the AUC, commanding an estimated 7,000 armed combatants. Jimenez-Naranjo controlled large areas where cocaine was produced, and his organization was responsible for exporting thousands of kilograms of cocaine from Colombia to Central America, Mexico and the United States using seaports and clandestine airstrips. Jimenez-Naranjo was extradited from Colombia to the United States on May 7, 2008, based on a provisional arrest warrant from separate

indictments in the District of Columbia and in the Southern District of Florida.

Mind you, Jimenez-Naranjo wasn't actually sentenced on Wednesday. He was sentenced back in May, in a rather arbitrary, sealed hearing at which the defendant's lawyer used actuarial data from the CIA to calculate a sentence that would not equate to a life sentence for a 45 year old man (when the US extradited men from Colombia, it promised not to impose life sentences). Since that hearing, his sentence has been sealed. Purportedly, that was done to allow him to cooperate with the government, to convince more of his former followers members to turn themselves in.

The transcript from a subsequent hearing has not yet been docketed, so it's not clear whether the government represented that he continued to cooperate. Certainly, his sentence was not reduced from the original sentence in May.

Now I raise all this to point out the alternative approach used with Colombia (and the relative silence regarding the sentencing of a terrorist far more dangerous than the aspirational lone wolves the FBI has focused on of late). Jimenez-Naranjo was extradited, not rendered. His charges were primarily drug charges, with one charge for trafficking in drugs to raise money for a terrorist organization. Though the DEA agent involved did emphasize the ties between drugs and terrorism.

"Investigations such as this clearly define the connection between drugs and terrorism," said Special Agent in Charge Mark R. Trouville of the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) Miami Field Office. "International narco-terrorist organizations oppress communities in their home countries through force and corruption, and fund these activities by supplying illegal drugs in our communities. Every time DEA and our federal and international law

enforcement partners dismantle a drug trafficking organization that funds or supports terrorism, we remove a serious threat and stop a funding source for terrorist acts.”

I’m not sure whether Jimenez-Naranjo’s incarceration here in the US is better than facing justice in Colombia. I’m not sure whether this represents justice for his victims or even a greater likelihood he won’t continue to traffic, as he had been doing while in prison on Colombia.

But by using this civil system, rather than an untested legal system and coercion rather than cooperation, our government has gotten years of cooperation from a top terrorist.