

CITY OF CORAL GABLES

- MEMORANDUM -

TO: SCOTT MASINGTON, MAJOR
AWARDS SELECTION COMMITTEE

DATE: DECEMBER 12, 2007

FROM: CORDELL ATHERLY, LIEUTENANT
SIS

SUBJECT:
2007 LEO AWARD NOMINATION

The purpose of this memorandum is to formally nominate Investigators Sergeant Alan Matas, Detectives Ivan Cabrera, and Detective William Swikehardt from the Coral Gables Police Department for the Investigative Service LEO Award 2007.

The reason for my nomination is based on the following long-term and complex criminal investigation:

On or about August, 2005, a documented Coral Gables confidential source contacted the above-mentioned investigators with information in reference to activities of a Colombian based Drug Trafficking Organization (DTO) involved in the maritime transportation of multi-ton quantities of cocaine from Colombia to the United States. During the initial stages of the investigation, the confidential source provided reliable information which included maps, maritime coordinates, vessel names, and individuals involved in this multi-ton cocaine trafficking organization.

After several weeks of intense criminal intelligence gathering, a joint investigation ensued (Operation WIDE WAKE) along with the Drug Enforcement Administration, and its international offices, the United States Coast Guard, the United States Navy, and other international, federal, and local law enforcement agencies. Over the course of the next two years, complex criminal intelligence continued to be developed by this confidential source and the above-mentioned investigators. This long-term criminal investigation led to the following multi-ton seizures:

On September 14, 2005, an international vessel was seized with 2.5 tons of cocaine as it departed Buenaventura, Colombia. This vessel was loaded prior to its departure and was seized by Colombian authorities through the information received by these investigators working along with the Department of Justice.

On September 16, 2005, another vessel was seized in Panama with approximately 6 tons of cocaine by the Panamanian authorities with the assistance of the Department of Justice.

On September 24, 2005, stockpiling cocaine operation led to the seizure of approximately 3,979 kilograms of cocaine, and the arrest of nine (9) defendants in Panama.

On June 12, 2006, the confidential informant reported to the investigators that a Go-Fast vessel was going to off-load 2,659 of cocaine to a Colombian fishing vessel. The shipment was intercepted by the USCG and four individuals were arrested.

On September 17, 2006, the confidential informant reported that a Go-fast vessel was transporting cocaine to Mexico. The USCG intercepted the vessel which led to the seizure of 590 kilograms of cocaine and the arrest of five individuals.

On September 20 2006, a Costa Rican vessel was seized with 621 Kilograms of cocaine and 34 kilograms of heroin. Four crew members were arrested.

On October 5 2006, a Costa Rican vessel was seized with 3,500 kilograms of cocaine and four crew members were arrested and charged.

On October 20, 2006, the USCG interdicted a Costa Rican vessel. On October 21, 2006, the USCG detained six crew members and off-loaded 389 bales of cocaine from this vessel.

On November 29, 2006, a Panamanian vessel was intercepted near the Galapagos Islands by the USCG. 108 bags of cocaine were seized (2.5 metric tons), and eight crew members were arrested and charged.

On December 14, 2006, The US Navy/USCG vectored in on a stateless go-fast vessel en route to Guatemala/Mexico. Upon sight of the US aircraft, the go-fast crew jettison the contraband from the vessel. The contraband (95 bales, approximately 2.4 metric tons of cocaine) was recovered by a US Navy/USCG surface asset later that day.

On January 12, 2007, the United States Navy/ US Coast Guard (USCG) vectored in on a vessel through information given by these investigators. This vessel was interdicted by the US Navy/USCG boarding team off the coast of Costa Rica. The USCG boarding team detained three crew members and recovered 99 bales of cocaine (approximately 2.5 metric tons).

On February 6, 2007, the United States Navy/USCG in conjunction with the Costa Rican Coast Guard (CRCG) disrupted a littoral go-fast operation near the vicinity of the border of Panama/Costa Rica off the Pacific Ocean. The CRCG recovered 63 bales of cocaine, 1,200 kilograms which was transferred to the Policia De Control De Drogas (Costa Rican Police) on February 2, 2007 for processing and safekeeping. This littoral go-fast disruption was again related to the ongoing investigation being conducted by these investigators along with HIDTA TF Group-11, the Cartagena RO, Costa Rican CO, Panama CO.

On March 30, 2007, the confidential informant learned of a pending maritime drug smuggling event from the pacific coast of the Choco Department of Colombia involving the LCA DTO that was scheduled for late March 2007. Based on the totality of the information, on March 30th the USG MPA was patrolling the zone where the event was anticipated to take place. The MPA detected two go-fast vessels heading for open water approximately 116 nautical miles off the coast of Colombia. As the U.S. MPA tracked the two go-fast vessels, they aborted their drug smuggling venture and headed for the Colombian coast in an attempt to evade capture. The

Colombian Coast Guard was alerted to the event and responded in USG-provided midnight express surface assets to an open water point approximately 12 nautical miles west of the town of Pizarro, Choco Department, Colombia. The Colombian Coast Guard was supported by a Colombian Air Force UH-60 helicopter and ground troops from the Colombian Marine Infantry. The four (4) crew members were apprehended. The Colombian authorities successfully seized 1,000 kilograms of cocaine HCL from the beached go-fast boat. Additionally, Colombian Authorities seized \$3,080.00 in U.S. currency and two (2) four-stroke outboard motors from the go-fast.

On May 2, 2007, the confidential informant provided information in reference to another vessel. This particular vessel was detected and seized off the Pacific coast of El Salvador. The vessel had approximately 1,000 kilograms of Cocaine HCL concealed within the fiberglass structure. Four crew members were arrested.

In early June 2007, DEA Group 11 in conjunction with the Cartagena RO, and the San Jose, Costa Rica, CO received highly reliable intelligence that a Colombian Organization had coordinated and were in the beginning stages of executing a massive movement of 15 metric tons of cocaine from Colombia through Panama and Costa Rica that was destined for Guatemala and Mexico; which would eventually reach U.S. soil. On June 2nd, the U.S. Naval Authorities interdicted this vessel off the Costa Rican coastline and seized 1,054 kilograms of cocaine and arrested (3) Crew members.

On June 6th, 2007, U.S. Naval assets spotted a go-fast vessel just off the Costa Rican coastline. U.S. Naval personnel embarked a coast guard boarding team to intercept said vessel. During the interdiction, the suspect crew scuttled and set fire to the vessel. USCG personnel were able to rescue three crew members from the sea, and salvage 220 kilograms of cocaine from the estimated 2 metric tons of cocaine aboard the vessel before it sank to the bottom of the ocean.

On June 6, 2007, the Panamanian National Marine Service seized a 30' long, blue-hulled, open-berthed go-fast style vessel equipped with two outboard motors at Isla Jicaron and brought it to Puerto Pedregal, Panama for further investigation. A seizure was obtained consisting of 1,164 kilograms of Cocaine HCL concealed within the fiberglass structure of the vessel. (3) Colombian Nationals were arrested based on the seizure.

On June 7th, 2007, a third go-fast vessel was located by U.S. Naval Assets (45) nautical miles from the Costa Rican/Panamanian border. U.S. Naval Officials had been tracking the vessel for several hours. The U.S. Naval Asset vectored in on the go-fast vessel in Costa Rican waters. The (3) crew members abandoned the vessel and swam to shore. U.S. Naval officials were unable to capture the (3) crew members, but however seized 1,002 kilograms of cocaine.

On June 7, 2007, the confidential informant advised these investigators that on June 6, 2007; approximately three tons of cocaine was moved from the area of Playa Dona Ana (Costa Rica) to a farm located in Alajuela (Turracas), Costa Rica. At approximately 1:30p.m. (June 7, 2007) Costa Rican authorities executed a search warrant at the farm and subsequently seized approximately 1.8 Metric tons of cocaine. During this enforcement operation, total of (6) Colombian Nationals were arrested.

Since its inception, this long-term complex criminal investigation involved extensive intelligence coordination with the El Paso Intelligence Center, the DEA Panama Country Office, the DEA Costa Rica Country Office, the DEA Colombia Country Office, the DEA Special Operations Division, the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South, and the U.S. Coast Guard of the complex coordination between all involved entities.

This complex investigation resulted in the seizure of more than 47 metric tons of cocaine, 34 kilograms of heroin, the arrest of 76 individuals and the seizure of 10 vessels (valued at more than \$850,000 USC).

With the assistance of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida (SDFL), those responsible for the transportation of the cocaine shipments will be prosecuted within the SDFL.

Due to all the above-mentioned outstanding and complex investigative performance, I commend all of these investigators for their devotion to their profession, and would recommend the well deserved LEO award for the year 2007.

Reviewed by:

Date:

Mark Ginn, Major
Criminal Investigation Division

Scott Masington, Major
Awards Selection Committee