



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney

Southern District of Florida

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November 3, 2008

NEWS RELEASE:

VENEZUELAN NATIONAL CONVICTED OF OPERATING AS ILLEGAL AGENT OF VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

A Miami federal jury convicted Venezuelan national **Franklin Duran**, on charges of acting and conspiring to act as an agent of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela ("Venezuela") within the United States, without prior notification to the Attorney General of the United States, as required by law, announced R. Alexander Acosta, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, Patrick Rowan, Assistant Attorney General for National Security, and Jonathan I. Solomon, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Miami Field Office.

In December 2007, Duran, 41, along with co-defendants **Moises Maionica**, 36, **Antonio Jose Canchica Gomez**, 37, **Rodolfo Wanseele Paciello**, 41, and **Carlos Kauffmann**, 36, were charged in a two-Count indictment for their participation in a series of meetings, beginning in August 2007, in South Florida with Guido Alejandro Antonini Wilson. According to testimony at trial, the purpose of these meetings was to procure Antonini's help in concealing the source and destination of, and the role of the government of Venezuela in, the intended delivery of an \$800,000 cash contribution to the political campaign of a then-Argentine presidential candidate. The last meeting took place on December 11, 2007, when defendants Duran, Maionica, and another individual met with Antonini in South Florida to discuss the creation of false documents in furtherance of the cover-up.

According to the evidence, various high-ranking Venezuelan government officials, including officials from the Office of the Vice President of the Republic, members of the DISIP (Intelligence and Preventive Services Directorate), and a high-ranking official from the Justice Ministry of Venezuela, were aware of this matter and directed the defendants' activities in South Florida. The defendants told Antonini that these funds had been destined for the campaign of a candidate in the Argentine presidential election.

U.S. Attorney Acosta stated, "This is not the first time that unregistered foreign agents have sought to do their nations' bidding in our backyard, in disregard of our laws and our sovereignty. Through this prosecution, as in the past, we voice our continued commitment to safeguarding our borders and our national integrity from intrusion by unregistered foreign agents who seek to maintain their presence hidden."

"Today's guilty verdict and the prior guilty pleas by three other defendants in this case should serve as a strong warning to others who operate illegally in the United States on behalf of foreign governments," said Patrick Rowan, Assistant Attorney General for National Security.

"When unregistered foreign agents believe that they can operate on our soil with impunity and disregard for U.S. laws, it undermines the national security of our country and the safety of our citizens. This case demonstrates our resolve in ensuring that activities conducted in the United States are free from illegal foreign influence." said Jonathan I. Solomon, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Miami Field Office.

Sentencing for defendant Duran has been scheduled for January 12, 2009. At sentencing, Duran faces a statutory maximum penalty of five (5) year's imprisonment on the conspiracy count (Count 1) and ten (10) years' imprisonment on the substantive count of acting as an unregistered foreign agent (Count 2). Defendants Maionica, Kauffmann, and Wanseele previously pled guilty and are awaiting sentencing. No sentencing date has been set yet. Defendant Canchica Gomez remains at large.

Mr. Acosta commended the investigative efforts of the Federal Bureau of Investigation for its work in this investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Thomas J. Mulvihill and John C. Shipley and Senior Trial Attorney Clifford I. Rones, of the Counterespionage Section at the Justice Department's National Security Division.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of Florida at www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls <<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/fls/>>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at www.flsd.uscourts.gov <<http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov/>> or on <<http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>> <<http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov/>>.