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Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Tuesday, January 4, 2022

Colombian National Charged in Connection with Plot to Kill Haitian President

A Colombian national was arrested based on a criminal complaint filed in the Southern District of Florida.

Mario Antonio Palacios, 43, is charged with conspiracy to commit murder or kidnapping outside the United States and providing material support resulting in death, knowing or intending that such material support would be used to prepare for or carry out the conspiracy to kill or kidnap.

As alleged in the complaint, which was unsealed today, these charges relate to the July 7, 2021, assassination of the former President of Haiti, Jovenel Moise, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. As alleged, the defendant and others, including a group of approximately 20 other Colombian citizens and a group of Haiti-based dual Haitian-American citizens, participated in a plot to kidnap or kill the Haitian President, with one conspirator ("Co-conspirator #1") traveling to the United States on June 28, 2021, to, among other things, provide other individuals with a written request for assistance to further the plot relating to the Haitian President.

As alleged in the complaint, while the plot initially focused on conducting a kidnapping of the president as part of a purported arrest operation, it ultimately resulted in a plot to kill the Haitian President. The complaint affidavit alleges that, on July 7, 2021, Palacios and others entered the president's residence in Haiti with the intent and purpose of killing President Moise, and in fact the president was killed.

Co-conspirator #1, a dual Haitian-American citizen, was subsequently arrested by Haitian authorities and remains in custody in Haiti. Palacios eluded arrest and traveled to Jamaica.

Palacios was recently deported from Jamaica and, during a layover in Panama, agreed to travel to the United States. He is currently in custody and will appear in court for his initial appearance later today.

If convicted of the charges in the complaint, Palacios faces a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department's National Security Division, U.S. Attorney Juan Antonio Gonzalez for the Southern District of Florida, and Special Agent in Charge George Piro of the FBI's Miami Field Office.

The FBI is investigating the case with other law enforcement partners, including Homeland Security Investigations.

Assistant U.S. Attorneys Andrea Goldberg and Walter Norkin are prosecuting the case with assistance from National Security Division Trial Attorneys Frank Russo and Emma Ellenrieder. The Criminal Division's Office of International Affairs provided valuable assistance.

A complaint is merely an allegation, and all defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

Attachment(s):

[Download Palacios Complaint](#)

Topic(s):

National Security

Component(s):

[Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#)

[National Security Division \(NSD\)](#)

[USAO - Florida, Southern](#)

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