

7-7-1992

Bolivian Government Approves Extradition Of Drug Trafficking Suspect To U.S.

Erika Harding

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur>

Recommended Citation

Harding, Erika. "Bolivian Government Approves Extradition Of Drug Trafficking Suspect To U.S.." (1992).
<https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/notisur/9629>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Latin America Digital Beat (LADB) at UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in NotiSur by an authorized administrator of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

Bolivian Government Approves Extradition Of Drug Trafficking Suspect To U.S.

by Erika Harding

Category/Department: General

Published: Tuesday, July 7, 1992

On July 1, the Bolivian Supreme Court for the first time authorized extradition of a cocaine trafficking suspect to face trial in the US. The court ruled that Asunta Beatriz Roca Suarez, 30, could be extradited, but at the same time rejected the extradition of her mother, Blanca Suarez, 65. Blanca is also the mother of Jorge Roca Suarez, once identified as the top cocaine trafficker in Bolivia but now in a California jail awaiting trial. Both women have been in prison since June 25, 1991, on drug trafficking charges. The charges include collaboration or supervision in moving millions of dollars of drug money from Los Angeles to Bolivia, purchase of cocaine or sulphate in the Chapare region (central Bolivia), and transport of coca to laboratories. Blanca Suarez will be released from custody. Bolivian sources who requested anonymity were quoted by EFE as saying that the US commenced applying pressure on the Bolivian government a few weeks ago. Among other things, Washington demanded action on extradition cases, plans to establish new levels of coca crop eradication as a condition for US economic aid, and stepped up arguments to militarize anti-drug trafficking efforts. The sources said that in a recent meeting, US diplomats told senior Bolivian officials that Washington is very unhappy with Bolivian anti-drug trade efforts. The diplomats pointed out that US authorities can arrest individuals abroad. Bolivia, they said, could be the first site of such actions. The recent pressure campaign was reportedly triggered by light sentences applied by Bolivian judges in June to two individuals wanted on drug trafficking charges in the US. According to a July 2 report by the Jatha news service (Bolivia), Interior Minister Carlos Saavedra Bruno said the government will not negotiate a new extradition treaty with the US. The minister said the 1900 treaty and the 1988 Vienna Convention are sufficient for bilateral "understanding" regarding extraditions. On July 3, President Jaime Paz Zamora rejected an appeal by Roca Suarez's attorneys to drop the Supreme Court's extradition decision by exercising his "constitutional prerogative." The president said the executive cannot choose to ignore court rulings, because Article 96 of the constitution prohibits such action. In Sucre, Supreme Court chief justice Edgar Oblitas said the president has the final word on turning citizens over to foreign law enforcement officials. He added that the president could revoke Roca's extradition. Professional associations of attorneys in La Paz and Sucre say the Supreme Court's decision was illegal. Also on July 3, inmates of La Paz prisons threatened to launch a hunger strike to express solidarity with Roca, and as a protest against the court ruling described as a violation of national sovereignty. On July 6, Supreme Court magistrate Edgar Rosales Lijeron denied that he was party to extortion of Roca Suarez. Roca Suarez's attorney, Maria Teresa Montano, delivered tape recordings to members of congress and journalists of what she described as conversations between Rosales Lijeron and her client's relatives. According to Montano, the recordings indicate that the justices demanded US\$570,000 in return for a decision against extradition of Roca Suarez. Rosales Lijeron was to receive US\$120,000, and the other justices, US\$50,000 each. After stating that she did not know of the recordings until after the court decision, Montano said the reason Roca Suarez will be extradited is because she did not enough money for the payoff demanded by the Supreme Court justices. (Sources: Associated Press, 07/02/92; Agence France-Presse, 07/03/92; Spanish news service EFE, 07/02/92, 07/03/92, 07/06/92)

-- End --