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ATTORNEY GENERAL STATEMENT REGARDING JUAN RAUL GARZA

WASHINGTON, D.C. Attorney General John Ashcroft today released the following statement regarding Juan Raul Garza:

- "Juan Raul Garza's guilt is not in doubt. In conjunction with his activities as the leader of a drug smuggling ring. He personally committed the murder of Thomas Rumbo by shooting him five times in the head and neck. He ordered the murder of Erasmo De La Fuente and paid the killers \$10,000 each. He also ordered the murder of Gilberto Matos whose killers were given money and a car.
- "In addition to these three murders, in the sentencing phase of the trial the jury found beyond a reasonable doubt that Garza was responsible for ordering the murders of Antonio Nieto, Bernabe Sosa, Diana Flores Villareal, Oscar Cantu, and Fernando Escobar Garcia. Thus, the jury found that Garza was responsible for eight murders.
- "The facts of Garza's case are important. Seven of Garza's eight victims were Hispanic; the prosecutor in the case is Hispanic; the presiding judge is Hispanic; at least six of the jurors are Hispanic and all of the jurors individually certified that race, color, religious beliefs, national origin, and sex were not involved in reaching their respective decisions.
- "In addition, of the six defendants -all of whom are Hispanic- w could have faced the federal death penalty from this jurisdiction in Texas, the government only sought the death penalty against Garza.

"Although no evidence of bias has been found in the administration of the federal death penalty, by former Attorney General Janet Reno or myself, the continuing review should serve to further instill public confidence and guarantee that our future efforts are consistent with the high standards of fairness. In the meantime, there is no evidence of racial bias in the sentence Mr. Garza received and, like former Attorney General Reno, I do not believe there is any reason to further delay his execution. His execution and the Department of Justice's ongoing efforts to review how death penalty cases are brought in the federal system serve the same goal: the preservation and protection of the public's confidence in our system of justice."