

Colombia's top cop shaken by kin's arrest

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BOGOTA, Colombia - The head of Colombia's judicial police - a top crime sleuth who has led a relentless crusade against the country's drug cartels - said he was shocked to learn his brother is suspected of involvement in a major European drug trafficking ring.

Gen. Oscar Naranjo broke the news of his brother's arrest in Germany to a stunned Colombian public this week. On Friday he said his brother, 29-year-old Juan David Naranjo, is accused of being part of what authorities say appears to be a major European drug smuggling operation.

"Juan David was a normal guy, an honest individual, though we haven't communicated very much in the past few years," Naranjo told The Associated Press. "My family and I could have never imagined he was involved in this."

An official in the German state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press, said Juan David Naranjo was arrested in the southwestern city of Karlsruhe for having 220 pounds of drugs. The official did not disclose the type of drugs found.

Gen. Naranjo said he had not spoken to his brother and that he did not know about the amount of drugs found. He said he believed two or three others were arrested in the German operation.

Naranjo revealed the arrest at a news conference Wednesday, saying he "never thought that the curse of drug trafficking, which I've fought against tirelessly in 30 years of public service, would reach my own doorstep."

Just as shocked were Colombians. Naranjo, the son of the former head of Colombia's national police and the oldest of seven children, rose through police ranks by arresting hundreds of drug traffickers who were later extradited to the United States.

He played a key role in the sting operation that brought down drug lord Pablo Escobar and later led the effort to dismantle the feared Cali cartel. His has drawn comparisons to Chicago crimebuster Eliot Ness, a U.S. treasury agent known for taking on mobster Al Capone.

President Alvaro Uribe immediately applauded Naranjo's decision to come forward, calling the police chief "a patriot that deserves the government's confidence."

Last month, Uribe tapped Naranjo to lead one of Colombia's biggest manhunts in years - the investigation into the killing of former President Cesar Gaviria's sister, slain during a botched kidnapping attempt.

"He's a police officer who wears a halo," said Alfredo Rangel, a political analyst. "He's unrivaled as an investigator and for his relentless crusade against Colombia's mafias."

Naranjo learned of his brother's arrest May 3. At the news conference, he said Germany authorities had advised him to keep silent until the investigation was completed. But he said he decided to come forward out of "conviction and responsibility to the country."

Naranjo said his brother moved to Spain six years ago, where he completed a degree in business management and entered the fast-food business in Madrid.

The brothers communicated sporadically by e-mail, and last saw each other a year and a half ago when Juan David Naranjo returned to Colombia to get married.

Colombia is the world's biggest supplier of cocaine and half of all shipments are believed to end up in Europe.