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PRESS RELEASE

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Four Sentenced to Prison Terms in Armed Kidnapping - Defendants Bound, Beat and Burned Victim in Retaliation For Burglary -

WASHINGTON - Three men and a woman were sentenced today to prison terms for the armed kidnapping and assault of a Maryland resident who used to work with them in the distribution of PCP, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced.

The defendants were convicted in April 2011 following a trial in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. They were sentenced today by the Honorable Ann O'Regan Keary.

Jammal Hale, 24, was sentenced to a 17-year prison term. Patrick Waldrop, 21, was sentenced to 11 years of incarceration. Ramona Watson, 30, was sentenced to eight years in prison, and Devin Burgess, 24, was sentenced to seven years. Hale, Waldrop and Watson are from Washington, D.C., and Burgess is from District Heights, Md.

Hale, Waldrop and Watson were convicted of armed kidnapping and possession of a firearm during the commission of a crime of violence. Burgess was convicted of kidnapping.

According to the government's evidence, the defendants and the victim had engaged in the distribution of PCP in early 2010. The victim, then 20, became disillusioned with his co-conspirators in March 2010, when he was left to take the blame after Prince George's County police caught him and one of the defendants in a vehicle with approximately one ounce of PCP, and further after another defendant stood by while he was assaulted just days before the kidnapping.

The victim responded by breaking into an apartment shared by two of the defendants on March 25, 2010, and stealing PCP and at least one firearm from his co-conspirators. The defendants punished the victim by kidnapping and torturing him. They took the victim to multiple locations, where he was bound with duct tape, beaten, burned, and interrogated until he confessed to the theft, revealed the identity of two others involved in the theft, and helped recover the stolen firearm.

The victim was eventually taken to the Benning Park Recreation Center, where the defendants solicited others to beat him, strip him of his pants, and throw him into a dumpster. The victim managed to escape and obtain assistance from family members.

In announcing the sentences, U.S. Attorney Machen commended the outstanding work of the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) officers who investigated the kidnapping and lent other expertise and support, including Detectives Anthony Johnson, Jeffrey Dixon, and Thomas Sepulveda, and Officers Wade Zech and Joseph Abdalla.

U.S. Attorney Machen also commended members of the U.S. Attorney's Office's Criminal Investigation Unit, whose investigation and witness security efforts were exemplary. In particular, he cited the work of Investigator Melissa Matthews, as well as Lawrence Grasso, Christopher Brophy, Tommy Miller, Durand Odom, Nelson Rhone, and Mark Crawford. U.S. Attorney Machen also praised the investigative efforts and expertise of the FBI Special Agent who worked on the case, and he thanked Sergeant Jeremy Bull of the Prince George's County Police Department for his contributions to the investigation.

U.S. Attorney Machen also praised the outstanding work of the U.S. Attorney's Office's Victim-Witness Assistance Unit, including Jennifer Clark, Debra Cannon, Shawn Slade, and Tanya Via, who provided critical support and services to civilian witnesses. U.S. Attorney Machen recognized the assistance of Leif Hickling and Paul Howell, of the Litigation Services Unit, as well as Paralegal Specialists Fern Rhedrick and Antoinette Sakamsa, whose work was essential in preparing the case for trial. Finally, he expressed his special appreciation to Assistant U.S. Attorneys J.P. Cooney and Adam Schwartz, who investigated and prosecuted the case.

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