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**U.S. CHARGES 14 DEFENDANTS IN ALLEGED CONSPIRACY INVOLVING
“POISON LINE” HEROIN RING ON CITY’S SOUTHEAST SIDE**

CHICAGO – A Chicago Police Department and Drug Enforcement Administration investigation code-named *Operation Antidote* has resulted in federal drug conspiracy charges against 14 defendants, including **Aukey Williams**, who allegedly headed a high-volume retail sales organization of a street-name brand of heroin known as “the Poison Line,” local and federal law enforcement officials announced today. Williams and his co-defendants allegedly operated The Poison Line in the vicinity of 7900 South Cottage Grove on the city’s southeast side. The operation ran day and night shifts, with three to four workers per shift, selling \$10 bags of heroin to sometimes hundreds of customers daily, according to a federal criminal complaint that was unsealed following the arrests of Williams and others. One co-defendant, **Maurice Williams**, alone, allegedly sold approximately 90 bags of heroin – totaling about 19 grams – to Poison Line customers on a daily basis since January this year when the investigation began with CPD’s Gang Intelligence Unit.

Undercover Chicago police officers, assigned to the Narcotics and Gang Investigations Section, posed as drug customers and made more than two dozen controlled purchases of heroin from alleged sellers of the Poison Line brand during the investigation, which ended when Chicago police

and DEA agents began executing federal search warrants and arresting defendants Wednesday night and yesterday. All 14 defendants were charged with conspiracy to possess and distribute more than a kilogram of heroin since January 2007, announced, Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Dana V. Starks, Acting Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department; Gary G. Olenkiewicz, Special Agent-in-Charge of the DEA Chicago Field Division; and Thomas Dart, Cook County Sheriff. The investigation was conducted through the federal High Intensity Drug-Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force, the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), and the CPD's Narcotics and Gang Investigation Section. Several juveniles who were arrested are facing state charges.

So far, seven defendants, including Aukey Williams, also known as "Key," 28, of Calumet City; Maurice Williams, aka "Reece," 21, of Chicago, are in custody, and they were scheduled to appear at 11 a.m. today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Maria Valdez in U.S. District Court.

According to the complaint affidavit, the Poison Line has many regular customers and typically operates in an area bounded by 71st Street to 87th Street, and from State Street to Stony Island in Chicago. The distribution network functions primarily by use of a "work phone," which is used to coordinate the sales of the heroin to customers. The phone number of the work phone is known to the customers who call the work phone to order heroin. Typically, a customer calls the Poison Line and places an order for a certain number of bags of heroin, with a price of \$10 per bag. A \$10 bag typically contains approximately .2 gram of heroin. The individual working the phone directs the customer to meet the worker at a specific location, typically on the street, to complete the transaction. When the workers have sold all of the heroin in their possession, a worker calls one of the individuals responsible for the re-supply of heroin. The worker then meets

with the individual responsible for re-supply in order to give that person the proceeds from the prior sales and to obtain additional bags of heroin. After the worker has been supplied with more heroin, the worker resumes taking orders and setting up meeting locations to complete heroin transactions with customers. This cycle continued routinely, and on a daily basis.

In addition to Aukey Williams and Maurice Williams, other defendants who allegedly participated in the conspiracy by answering a work phone and making arrangements to sell heroin or who sold heroin to the undercover officers are: **Mario Reeves**, aka “Rio,” 22; **Jontalle Booker**, aka “JT,” 20; **Marshawn Wright**, 21; **Javon Smith**, 22; **Dominique White**, 18; **Vince Gathings**, 41; **Tavaris Williams**, aka “Nuke,” 23; **Lindell Blount**, aka “Lockjaw,” 20; **Nicole Bozeman**, aka “Nikki,” 35; **Larry Johnson**, aka “Laro,” 22; and **Tom Brown**, aka “T-Bone” and “Tone,” 26, all of Chicago.

Another defendant, **Kenneth Harris**, aka “Santa Claus,” 44, of Chicago, allegedly acted mainly as a “point man” by gathering groups of customers, collecting their money and calling the work phone to place an order and advising the worker using the work phone where the customers were located, in addition to occasionally distributing heroin to customers.

The government is being represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael Donovan and Marny Zimmer.

If convicted, each defendant faces a mandatory minimum of 10 years in prison and a maximum of life imprisonment without parole and a maximum fine of \$4 million. The Court, however, would determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the advisory United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The public is reminded that a complaint contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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