



## U. S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney  
Northern District of Illinois

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United States Attorney

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### U.S. JURY CONVICTS STREET GANG LEADER OF FEDERAL DRUG CHARGES

CHICAGO — The leader of a west side drug-trafficking conspiracy operated by members and associates of the Traveling Vice Lords street gang was convicted by a jury yesterday of federal narcotics charges following a trial in U.S. District Court. **Jason Austin**, 29, of Chicago, was found guilty of conspiracy to possess and distribute heroin and five counts of distributing crack cocaine after several hours of deliberation late Wednesday and yesterday. The trial began Feb. 14.

Austin, who has been in federal custody since November 2010, faces a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison on each count. U.S. District Judge Joan Lefkow set sentencing for June 29.

Austin and 30 other members and associates of the Traveling Vice Lords were arrested in November 2010 as part of *Operation Blue Knight*, which focused on around-the-clock retail street sales of crack cocaine and heroin in the area of Kedzie Avenue and Ohio Street, known as “KO.” Significant amounts of crack cocaine and heroin were seized during the two-year investigation, which the Chicago Police Department’s Organized Crime Division began in 2008 and the Federal Bureau of Investigation joined several months later.

Today’s verdict was announced by Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; Garry McCarthy, Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department;

and Robert D. Grant, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The investigation was conducted under the umbrella of U.S. Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), and with assistance from the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force (HIDTA).

The evidence at trial showed that Austin, also known as “J Rock,” conspired with others to distribute crack cocaine, known as “rocks,” and heroin, known as “blows,” to customers via hand-to-hand transactions in the “KO.” The heroin, named “Blue Magic,” alone accounted for as much as \$8,000 a day in sales, between approximately 6 a.m. and 11 p.m., seven days a week. During the investigation, law enforcement officers repeatedly surveilled the conduct of co-conspirators at KO. Surveillance, often video recorded, observed hand-to-hand drug transactions, controlled purchases of narcotics by undercover Chicago police officers, and controlled purchases of narcotics by confidential sources.

The government is being represented by Assistant United States Attorneys Maribel Fernandez-Harvath and Matthew Madden.

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