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**ENFORCER FOR A CAMDEN DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION SENTENCED
TO TWO CONSECUTIVE LIFE SENTENCES PLUS 25 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON
FOR MURDER, ATTEMPTED MURDER OF A WITNESS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING**

CAMDEN, N.J. – A Camden, New Jersey enforcer and hit man for the Raymond Morales drug trafficking organization was sentenced today to two consecutive life sentences plus 300 months in federal prison, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Juan Rivera-Velez, 36, a.k.a. “Junito,” and “Two-Face,” was previously found guilty after a nine-week jury trial of murder in furtherance of a conspiracy to distribute powder and crack cocaine; witness tampering through the attempted murder of a witness; conspiracy to distribute cocaine and crack cocaine; and use of a firearm in relation to witness tampering. U.S. District Judge Joseph E. Irenas imposed the sentence today in Camden federal court.

According to documents filed in this case and testimony in court:

From 1993 through April 2003, Rivera-Velez conspired with Raymond Morales and others to distribute cocaine and crack cocaine in the Camden area and to protect Morales’ continuing criminal enterprise through the use of threats and violence, including murder.

The jury found that in relation to the drug trafficking conspiracy, Rivera-Velez used a handgun to commit the premeditated murder of Miguel Batista, of Camden, on Sept. 26, 1996. On April 5, 2003, Rivera-Velez shot Rafael Colon-Rodriguez, of Camden, in the head in an attempt to kill him and prevent him from communicating with law enforcement or providing court testimony regarding Batista’s murder. Colon-Rodriguez survived the attempt on his life and testified at Rivera-Velez’ trial.

Rivera-Velez’ sentencing concludes a seven-year joint federal, state and local law enforcement investigation into Morales’ continuing criminal enterprise, which resulted in the conviction of 24 defendants on federal charges and an additional 35 on state charges. The Morales enterprise distributed thousands of kilograms of cocaine and crack cocaine to many of Camden’s other significant drug-trafficking organizations from 1993 through 2003, and it protected and furthered its operations through violence and intimidation, including six contract murders and the attempted murder of Colon-Rodriguez.

Four defendants, all of whom had gone to trial, received life sentences. Eighteen of the 24 federal defendants received 10 years or more, with eight of them receiving more than 20 years in prison. In addition to dismantling the Morales organization, the investigation disrupted five

other large-scale drug organizations which had been operating in Camden for years: the Jevon Lewis “Cool V” organization; Mack Jones “Bear” organization; Mark Davis “Andos” organization; Ronald Damon “Rockmeyer” organization; and 19th and River Road organization.

Because of the severity of his conduct and because of Rivera-Velez’ prior convictions for drug trafficking and manslaughter (making Rivera-Velez a “career offender” under the advisory Sentencing Guidelines), his advisory Guidelines range was life in prison. In discussing the application of the Guidelines, Judge Irenas said, “the Guidelines say this man should spend every day of the rest of his life in jail, and I simply can’t find one circumstance that tells me that the Guidelines got it wrong.”

In pronouncing the sentence, Judge Irenas stated: “He is a violent man and it took very little to provoke his violence.” Judge Irenas also said, “every day he is free would be a danger to society.”

U.S. Attorney Fishman thanked special agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”), under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge John G. McCabe Jr., in Newark; and Investigators with the Camden County Prosecutor’s Office Homicide Unit, under the direction of Camden County Prosecutor Warren W. Faulk; along with member agencies of the Camden Initiative – which falls under the Philadelphia/Camden High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (“HIDTA”) Task Force. The Camden Initiative includes the United States Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey, DEA, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Department of Homeland Security, Camden Police Department, Camden County Prosecutor’s Office, Cherry Hill Police, New Jersey State Police, and the State of New Jersey Office of the Attorney General’s Division of Criminal Justice.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Diana Vondra Carrig and Howard Wiener of the U.S. Attorney’s Office Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense counsel: Louis Charles Shapiro, Esq., Vineland, N.J.