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Camden Drug-Trafficking Gang Member Sentenced to 120 Months in Federal Prison

– Cooperation with Law Enforcement Credited –

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TRENTON – A member of a notorious Camden drug-trafficking gang who cooperated with the federal law enforcement authorities was sentenced today to 120 months in federal prison, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Freda L. Wolfson also ordered Lamont Powell, a/k/a “Mont G,” 29, Camden, to pay a \$2,000 fine and to serve 8 years of supervised release upon the completion of his prison sentence.

Powell was arrested on March 28, 2003, on a federal Indictment that charged the leaders and nine other members of the “Tuten Organization,” along with two major Camden drug wholesale suppliers. On April 15, 2004, Powell pleaded guilty before Judge Wolfson to one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with the intent to distribute heroin and crack cocaine.

Powell cooperated with the federal government and testified at the trial of four of his co-defendants: Leonard Paulk, a/k/a “Pooh,” Lorenzo Hardwick, a/k/a “Fu Quan,” Martin Johnson, a/k/a “Rahmeen,” and Stanley Crump, a/k/a “Mujahed,” all of Camden. On Nov. 30, 2004, Paulk was convicted of being one of the leaders of the organization. He was later sentenced to life imprisonment. The jury was unable to reach a verdict regarding the guilt or innocence of Johnson and Crump. They each later entered pleas of guilty to lesser charges. The jury acquitted Hardwick.

Powell also cooperated with the federal government and testified at the trials of two leaders of the “Perez Organization,” Bernard Murray, a/k/a “B-Nice” and Allen Resto, a/k/a “Tito Allen,” and two Perez Organization drug-set managers, Lorenzo Hardwick, a/k/a “FuQuan,” and Jose Rodriguez, all of Camden. On June 6, 2005, after eight hours of deliberations, the jury convicted Murray and Resto, both leaders of the Perez organization, Hardwick, a drug-set manager, and Rodriguez, a heroin bagger, of one count of conspiracy to distribute heroin and crack cocaine. The jury also convicted Murray, Resto and Hardwick of one count of possessing, brandishing and use of firearms, namely an AK-47 rifle and three handguns, in relation to a drug trafficking crime in the February 2001 murder of Hiram Rosa, a Rutgers University student. The three defendants also were convicted of one count each of use of a firearm in the furtherance of a drug crime, that being discharging, possessing and using firearms in the furtherance of the overall conspiracy.

Murray and Resto also were convicted of two counts of possessing, brandishing and use of firearms in relation to a drug trafficking crime. The charges are in connection with the use of a 9 millimeter handgun in the March 2001 murder of Kenneth Allen; and using an AK-47 and a .22 caliber handgun in the October 2001 murder of Troy James, as the killings related to the drug conspiracy.

Murray was also convicted of one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm relating to

a semi-automatic handgun found in his home on the day of his arrest.

In sentencing the defendant, Judge Wolfson recognized a need to reward cooperation and send a message to the community about the importance of cooperating with the government. Judge Wolfson noted that had Powell not cooperated he would have faced a potential sentence of 30 years to life.

In determining the sentence, Judge Wolfson consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, was not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler sentenced Murray to life plus 85 years in federal prison on June 2, 2006. Hardwick was sentenced by Judge Kugler to life plus 30 years in federal prison on April 28, 2006. Resto is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge Kugler on Dec. 15.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI Southern New Jersey Resident Office, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge J.P. Weis in Philadelphia, Investigators with the Camden County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Acting Prosecutor James P. Lynch, Detectives with the Camden Police Department, under the direction of Arturo Venegas, Supersession Executive, the Camden County Sheriff's Department, under the direction of Sheriff William Fontanez, the New Jersey State Police, under the direction of Superintendent Joseph R. Fuentes; the DEA, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerard P. McAleer; the Gloucester County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Sean F. Dalton, and the U.S. Marshal's Service, under the direction of U.S. Marshal James T. Plousis, with developing the investigation.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kevin T. Smith and Jason M. Richardson of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Christopher O'Malley, Esq. Asst. Federal Public Defender