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LIFE SENTENCE FOR LEADER OF HEROIN TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION

COLUMBUS – Ronald Kelsor, 55, of Columbus was sentenced in United States District Court jury here today to life in prison for leading a heroin trafficking organization that operated throughout central and southern Ohio from 2004 until his arrest in April, 2008.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Anthony C. Marotta, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Union County Sheriff Rocky W. Nelson, Columbus Police Chief Walter Distelzweig, and Chris Sadowski, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and other state and local law enforcement agencies participating in the investigation announced the sentence handed down today by Senior U.S. District Judge James L. Graham.

Kelsor was convicted on August 17, 2009 of leading a heroin trafficking conspiracy out of houses in southern and southeastern Columbus. After a seven-day trial and three hours of deliberation, the jury convicted Kelsor of one count of conspiracy to distribute more than 1,000 grams of heroin, two counts of possession with intent to distribute heroin, 15 counts of unlawful use of a communications facility, two counts of possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug crime and two counts of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

During the trial, the government presented 19 witnesses who testified to Kelsor's leadership role in the conspiracy. The government also introduced as evidence transcripts of 56 of the approximately 10,000 wire communications agents and officers monitored during the investigation between February and April 2008. The transcripts recounted phone calls between Kelsor and others discussing the price and delivery of heroin.

The investigation, known as "Operation Alley Way" because the organization distributed heroin along U.S. Route 33 from Marysville into Athens County, eventually led to federal charges against 32 people.

Twenty-six others charged in connection with the investigation have pleaded guilty and received sentences ranging from probation to 144 months imprisonment. Two of the original defendants are deceased.

Stewart commended the cooperative investigation by DEA agents, Union County Sheriff's and Columbus Police detectives, and ATF agents, along with Assistant U.S. Attorneys Don Pashayan and Salvador A. Dominguez, who prosecuted the case.

Other agencies participating in the task force include the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation in Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray's Office, the Ohio State Highway Patrol, the Fairfield Hocking Major Crimes Unit, and the police departments in Westerville and

Upper Arlington. The Ohio National Guard provided intelligence analysis in the investigation. The Athens County Sheriff's Office and the Athens Police Department assisted with the arrests.

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