



Department of Justice

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JURY CONVICTS LEADER OF MULTI-STATE DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION

Last of 31 people convicted in "Operation Georgia Peach"

COLUMBUS – A United States District Court jury here today convicted Maurice Williams, aka "Papa Joe", 34, of Columbus, Ohio and Decatur, Georgia with operating a continuing criminal enterprise for leading a drug trafficking network responsible for distributing hundreds of kilograms of cocaine and marijuana over a four-year period.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Cincinnati Field Division, Columbus Police Chief Walter Distelzweig, Franklin County Sheriff Jim Karnes, Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray and Delaware County Sheriff Walter Davis announced the verdict returned today at the conclusion of a trial that began March 22, 2010 before U.S. District Judge Edmund A. Sargus, Jr.

The jury convicted Williams on 29 counts including one count of operating a continuing criminal enterprise, which is punishable by at least 20 years and up to life imprisonment. The jury also convicted Williams of one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than five kilograms of cocaine, punishable by at least 10 years and up to life imprisonment, and one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute 50 kilograms or more of marijuana, punishable by up to 20 years imprisonment. The jury convicted Williams of 25 counts of use of a telephone in the commission of a felony. Each count is punishable by up to four years imprisonment and one count of possession of a firearm in a drug trafficking crime, punishable by five years imprisonment consecutive to any prison time served for other crimes. The jury also ordered him to forfeit cash, vehicles and firearms seized during the investigation.

On February 26, 2009, teams of federal, state and local law enforcement agents began arresting 31 people charged for their roles in the operation. The arrests capped a year-long investigation by the FBI, Columbus Police, Franklin County Sheriff's Office and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI). Williams remained a fugitive until FBI agents arrested him in Charlotte, North Carolina on August 14, 2009.

Thirty others indicted as part of the investigation have pleaded guilty to crimes for their role in the drug trafficking organization. Many of the co-defendants testified during Williams' trial.

One defendant, Damon Hoskins, 34, Mason, Ohio, was sentenced to ten years imprisonment, for conspiracy and possession of a firearm in a drug crime. Rigoberto Guzman Chavez, 38, of Columbus, was sentenced to 63 months imprisonment for conspiracy and illegal re-entry of a deported alien. Antonio Simmons, 35, Marietta, Georgia, was sentenced to five years

imprisonment for conspiracy and Allison M. Blake, 34, of Columbus was sentenced to probation for use of a telephone in the commission of a felony. The rest are awaiting sentencing.

Stewart commended the cooperative investigation by the officers with the Columbus Police Strategic Response Bureau, the Delaware County Drug Task Force, and agents participating in the FBI Task Force, as well as Assistant U.S. Attorneys David DeVillers and Robyn Hahnert, who are prosecuting the case.

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