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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Detroit, Michigan

**DEFENDANT SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS IN PRISON
ON DRUG CONSPIRACY CHARGES**

A Defendant, who operated a narcotic trafficking conspiracy in Jackson, MI, was sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 15 years, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Thomas Brandon, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Sentenced by U.S. District Judge John Corbett O'Meara was Labaron Wardlaw, 34, of Detroit. Wardlaw entered a guilty plea to Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute Cocaine Base on August 9, 2007. The maximum statutory penalty for that offense is life imprisonment.

The conspiracy, headed by Wardlaw, operated from approximately October 2005 until March 24, 2006. The conspiracy involved in excess of 1.5 kilograms of cocaine base. Cocaine base was sold from several houses and sales locations in and around the City of Jackson, MI. The remaining co-conspirators will be sentenced in June and July, 2008.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, " Project Safe Neighborhoods targets some of the most dangerous offenders who threaten the safety of our communities with their criminal operations. I am pleased that our federal enforcement efforts in Jackson, Michigan, and particularly that the Jackson County authorities and the ATF's collaborative investigations, resulted in the significant prison sentence handed down today."

Special Agent in Charge Brandon said, “Illegal drugs and guns go hand in hand and are a threat to the safety of our citizens and law enforcement officers. This sentence shows that ATF is dedicated to working with our state and local law enforcement partners to reduce violent crime by targeting those individuals who use guns to protect their drugs and drug proceeds.”

The investigation of this case has been conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, with cooperation and assistance from the City of Jackson Police Department and the Jackson County Prosecutor’s Office. The case has been prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David Portelli and Susan E. Gillooly.