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**MS-13 LEADER SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON ON RACKETEERING, MURDER  
AND FIREARMS CHARGES**

*Greenbelt*, Maryland - U.S. District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow sentenced Israel Ramos Cruz, a/k/a "Taylor," a/k/a "Sastre," age 30, of Wheaton, Maryland, today to life in prison after he was convicted of conspiracy to participate in a racketeering enterprise, conspiracy to commit murder in aid of racketeering, murder in aid of racketeering, witness tampering murder, murder resulting from use of a gun, assault with a dangerous weapon in aid of racketeering, being an alien in possession of a gun and ammunition, and an additional consecutive 35 years for two counts of use and carrying of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein said, "Joining MS-13 is a ticket to federal prison. Forty-nine alleged MS-13 gang members have been charged with federal crimes in Maryland. This young man will spend the rest of his life in federal prison, and some of the remaining defendants may face death sentences."

Mr. Rosenstein added, "Most Maryland jurisdictions have adopted anti-gang strategies that combine law enforcement, education and community awareness in a coordinated program to deter gang violence."

"The successful investigation and prosecution of Israel Ramos Cruz demonstrates that ATF's RAGE Task Force will not cease in our relentless pursuit to put violent gang members behind bars," says ATF Special Agent in Charge Gregory K. Gant. "We hope that with each passing year of his sentence, Cruz ponders his decision to become a violent member of MS-13, and how that decision has now earned him a membership card to federal prison."

"This life sentence proves that violent crime does not pay and should send a message to anyone contemplating gang activity." stated James A. Dinkins, Special Agent in Charge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement. "Successful cases such as this can only be accomplished through the joint efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies."

According to testimony presented at the six week trial, Cruz and co-defendant Santos Maximo Garcia, a/k/a "Curley," age 30, conspired from at least 2001 to March 2007 to operate

an MS-13 enterprise in Prince George's and Montgomery Counties through a pattern of racketeering activity which included eight murders in Maryland and one in Virginia; the use of deadly weapons including firearms, baseball bats, machetes, bottles or knives in the commission of numerous murders, attempted murders and assaults; assaults on an MS-13 gang member from El Salvador, juvenile females and rival gang members; kidnaping; obstruction of justice; and witness tampering.

Trial testimony showed that Cruz was the leader of the Sailors Locos Salvatruchos Westside (SLSW) clique in Prince George's County. Garcia collected and distributed dues from MS-13 members as a de facto treasurer for the SLSW clique.

Cruz and other members of SLSW stabbed Osmin Alfaro Fuentes, aka "Buso," an MS-13 member from El Salvador on January 1, 2003.

Gang members, including Randy Calderon, murdered a suspected rival gang member Eliuth Madrigal in Silver Spring, Maryland on November 22, 2003. Shortly thereafter, Cruz and others attempted to cover up the murder by painting the walls of the residence in which Madrigal had been repeatedly stabbed.

On November 22, 2003, Cruz told gang member Randy Calderon, a/k/a "Fenix" that they wanted to "tag" (put graffiti on) a wall to "celebrate" the murder of Madrigal. In fact, Cruz had decided to kill Calderon because Calderon had participated in the murder of Madrigal, which had not been sanctioned by MS-13, and they feared that Calderon would implicate himself and other gang members to law enforcement. Another gang member fatally shot Calderon.

On July 22, 2004, Cruz and Garcia falsely testified before a state grand jury in Prince George's County, Maryland that was investigating MS-13 and the May 2004 gang murder of Ashley Antonio Urias. During their sworn testimonies, Cruz and Garcia falsely and repeatedly indicated that they were not current MS-13 members and that they did not know many MS-13 members.

From June 2002 to August 2005, Cruz and Garcia attended numerous meetings of MS-13, including a meeting in which gang members watched a videotape of gang investigators from the Prince George's County Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Gang members identified investigating officers and agents, discussed ways to thwart law enforcement efforts and commented on the possibility of retaliation against police during several meetings.

Garcia faces a maximum sentence of life in prison for conspiracy to participate in a racketeering enterprise. U.S. District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow scheduled sentencing for Garcia on August 15, 2008.

To date, this office has charged 49 gang members with various federal offenses, with 30 defendants charged in this RICO conspiracy case. Eighteen MS-13 members have been convicted in this RICO conspiracy case. Two MS-13 gang members were convicted at trial in

November 2006 of conspiracy to commit murder in aid of racketeering, conspiracy to participate in a racketeering enterprise and conspiracy to commit assaults with a deadly weapon: Oscar Ramos Velasquez, age 23, of Baltimore, was sentenced to 37 years in prison and Edgar Alberto Ayala, age 30, of Suitland, Maryland was sentenced to 35 years in prison. Three MS-13 leaders were convicted at trial in April 2007 on all counts of the racketeering conspiracy involving murder, robbery, obstruction of justice and witness tampering: Henry Zelaya, age 23, of Woodbridge, Virginia, and Omar Vasquez, age 29, of Alexandria, Virginia were sentenced to life in prison and Jose Hipolito Cruz, age 28, of Lanham, Maryland was sentenced to 35 years in prison.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein expressed his appreciation for the investigative work performed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Prince George's County Police Department; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the Montgomery County Department of Police; the Howard County Police Department; the Maryland National Capital Park Police; the Maryland State Police. The U.S. Attorney also recognized Prince George's County State's Attorney Glenn F. Ivey, and Montgomery County State's Attorney John McCarthy, for the assistance that they and their offices provided.

Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys James Trusty and Chan Park, who prosecuted the case.