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September 19, 2008
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**TTP BLOODS GANG LEADER SENTENCED TO 25 YEARS FOR RACKETEERING
CONSPIRACY**

Defendant Led Violent Gang from Jail Through Phone Calls and Letters

Baltimore, Maryland - U.S. District Judge William D. Quarles, Jr. sentenced Steve Willock, age 29, of Baltimore, Maryland, to 25 years in prison, followed by five years of supervised release after Willock pleaded guilty today to conspiracy to conduct and participate in the activities of a racketeering enterprise known as the Tree Top Piru Bloods (TTP Bloods), announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein and Baltimore City State's Attorney Patricia C. Jessamy. This case is the result of a long-term joint investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office and the United States Attorney's Office.

"It takes coordinated law enforcement to fight organized gangs," said U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein. "We are fortunate in Maryland that local, state and federal authorities are working together to investigate and prosecute violent gangs. I am grateful to the local prosecutors and police and the state corrections officials who are helping to lead our statewide anti-gang initiative."

"This federal sentence demonstrates the strength and success of our local partnership with the United States Attorney's Office to prosecute gang violence in Maryland," said State's Attorney Patricia C. Jessamy. "This joint investigation was developed as a result of the highly specialized investigatory expertise of state prosecutors who worked with federal and local law enforcement to dismantle a violent drug organization and its leaders. This was a strategic operation that went beyond street level arrests, inflicting a significant blow to a violent narcotics gang in Baltimore."

"Here is proof," said ATF Acting Special Agent in Charge David L. McCain, "that we are making great progress in the war against gang violence-one violent offender at a time."

According to the plea agreement, TTP Bloods originated from a street gang known as "the Bloods" that was formed in Los Angeles, California in the early 1970s. As time passed, the Bloods spread to other locations and broke into individual "sets." One such Bloods set based in

Compton, California was called Piru Bloods. From this set emerged a subset known as Tree Top Pirus (TTP). The name derived from a group of streets in Compton named after trees.

TTP spread throughout the country, including Maryland. TTP in Maryland has its roots in a local gang which began in the Washington County Detention Center in Hagerstown, Maryland in about 1999. TTP spread throughout Maryland mostly as a result of recruitment from inside Maryland prisons. Over time, a group of female gang members formed a subset of TTP known as the Tree Top Pirettes.

According to the statement of facts, as part of the conspiracy gang members of TTP would meet regularly: to discuss past acts of violence and other crimes committed by gang members against rival gang members and others; to notify one another about gang members who were arrested or incarcerated; to discuss the disciplining of TTP gang members; to discuss police interactions with gang members; to share with one another the identities of individuals who may be cooperating with law enforcement and propose actions to be taken against those individuals; to plan and agree upon the commission of future crimes, including murders, robberies, drug trafficking, and assaults, and the means to cover up these crimes; and to reinforce gang rules. TTP gang members and associates of TTP purchased, maintained and circulated a collection of firearms for use in criminal activity by TTP members. In addition, TTP gang members and associates of TTP committed acts of murder, and other acts of violence against rival gang members and imposed discipline within TTP itself, and committed violent acts on other occasions as deemed necessary.

From at least 2005 through February 2008, Willock acted as a leader of the TTP Bloods and directed the gang's drug distribution business, including from prison, where in a series of recorded telephone calls, Willock and other conspirators discussed ways to obtain drugs and have them brought to the prison where Willock was housed. In addition, Willock maintained contact with TTP leaders in Compton, California, obtaining from the California leaders the full history of the gang and describing for them the organization and leaders of TTP in Maryland. Willock also used his authority to conduct gang business from prison, including ordering gang meetings, demoting one gang member and advising another that gang members who did not follow the rules would be sanctioned.

Twenty-seven additional gang members have been charged in the racketeering conspiracy. Van Sneed, age 32, of Baltimore, Maryland, Shaneka Penix, age 22, of Dundalk, and Orlando Gilyard, age 21, of Woodlawn, Maryland, pleaded guilty to the RICO conspiracy. Gilyard was sentenced to 115 months in prison. Sneed and Penix face a maximum of life in prison. The remaining defendants' charges are pending.

United States Attorney Rosenstein and Baltimore City State's Attorney Jessamy praised the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Baltimore City Police Department, Baltimore County Police Department, Wicomico County State's Attorney Office, Wicomico County Sheriff's Office, Washington County Narcotics Task Force, Western Correctional Institution, North Branch Correctional Institution, Anne Arundel County Police Department, the Hagerstown Police Department and the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services for their investigation of this Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force case.

Mr. Rosenstein and Mrs. Jessamy also thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jason Weinstein and Steve Levin, and Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Christopher Mason, a cross-designated Baltimore City Assistant State's Attorney, who are prosecuting the case and Assistant State's Attorney LaRai Forrest who assisted in the prosecution.