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29 OF 30 DEFENDANTS CONVICTED IN VIOLENT DRUG ORGANIZATION

Baltimore, Maryland - Rod J. Rosenstein, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announces that today the trial of the last of the 30 defendants apprehended in the Tyree Stewart case concluded. 29 of the 30 defendants have been convicted following a three-year investigation of a large, lucrative marijuana-trafficking enterprise led by Tyree Stewart, age 31, of Baltimore, Maryland. The enterprise operated in the western district of Baltimore City from the mid-1990s through August 2003.

Mr. Rosenstein stated that, "Dismantling violent drug organizations is one of the primary missions of the United States Attorney's Office, and it is a central part of our strategy for combating violent crime in Baltimore City. We will continue to fight drug traffickers and the people who help them bring illegal drugs and violence to the streets of Baltimore."

On August 20, 2003 an indictment was unsealed charging Stewart and 31 others with crimes arising from their operation of the marijuana-trafficking organization responsible for the distribution of approximately 20,000 pounds of marijuana in west Baltimore for five years.

The 20-count indictment charged that from 1998 through August 2003, the defendants' organization distributed a high-quality form of marijuana known as "Arizona" through various markets or "shops" located in the 1800 and 1900 block of West Lanvale Street, the corner of Edmondson and Fulton Avenues, and the 700 block of Kirby Lane. Each shop was managed by one of Stewart's lieutenants. Workers at the shops packaged marijuana for retail sale and distributed that marijuana from a residence, business, or nearby street location.

In November 2004, a superseding indictment was filed charging several additional New York suppliers of the organization. That superseding indictment also charged several members of the organization, including Ernest Roberts, with distributing heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine in the same west Baltimore area between 1992 and 2002.

In all, a total of 35 defendants were charged in the case. 30 of the defendants – including

two former employees of Baltimore City's Central Booking and Intake Facility – have been apprehended; five remain fugitives. Of the 30 defendants who were apprehended, 28 have entered guilty pleas to charges ranging from obstruction of justice and money laundering to narcotics conspiracy and continuing criminal enterprise. In April 2004 defendants Tyree Stewart and Corey Smith pleaded guilty to participating in a continuing criminal enterprise and await sentencing. Defendants Damon Deshields and Robert Smith, who operated two of the organization's marijuana "shops," each pleaded guilty to narcotics conspiracy charges and were sentenced to 168 months and 188 months imprisonment, respectively. The other defendants who have pleaded guilty have been sentenced, or are facing sentences, to terms of imprisonment ranging from five years to life in prison.

In June 2005, a 29th defendant, Ernest Roberts, was convicted after a two-week trial of conspiracy to distribute marijuana, heroin, cocaine, and crack cocaine and will be sentenced in October 2005. Roberts faces a mandatory minimum term of 10 years imprisonment and a maximum penalty of life.

During the course of the investigation, law enforcement agents recovered approximately \$100,000 of the organization's drug proceeds and seized weapons and a large quantity of high-grade marijuana. Six residences and numerous vehicles were also forfeited to the United States.

As a result of information developed during this investigation, more than a dozen murders – including three contract murders ordered by Stewart's organization – have been solved by the Baltimore Police Department. The investigation of several other murders and shootings is continuing.

Today a federal jury acquitted Jeremiah Kelly, age 45, of Baltimore, Maryland of conspiracy and obstruction of justice.

This case is the result of a joint investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Baltimore City Police Department, and the United States Attorney's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Jason M. Weinstein and Paul M. Tiao.