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**U.S. INDICTS 16 ALLEGED LEADERS AND MEMBERS OF INSANE DEUCES
STREET GANG IN 11 YEAR RICO AND DRUG DISTRIBUTION
CONSPIRACIES**

Murders and attempted murders in Aurora among alleged acts of violence

CHICAGO – Four murders and five attempted murders are alleged among a series of crimes spanning 11 years that were charged in a federal indictment charging racketeering and drug distribution conspiracies against 16 members of the Insane Deuces street gang in Aurora, Elgin and Chicago, federal, state and local law enforcement authorities announced today. A task force led by Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives agents and state and local police and sheriff's deputies, began executing federal arrest and search warrants early today in Chicago, Aurora and other western suburbs as part of *Operation Double Down*, which is part of a sustained, coordinated strategy to dismantle the leadership of the area's highly-organized, violent, drug-trafficking street gangs.

By early afternoon, seven defendants were arrested, including **Bolivar Benabe**, of Chicago, allegedly the highest-ranking member of the Insane Deuces outside prison. Officers and agents also seized three guns from Benabe's residence while executing eight search warrants at the residences of various defendants. Seven remaining defendants were already in either state or federal custody.

Those arrested today were scheduled to have their initial court appearance at 3:30 p.m. tomorrow before U.S. Magistrate Judge Martin Ashman in U.S. District Court.

A 13-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Sept. 21 and unsealed today charges all 16 defendants with participating in a racketeering conspiracy since 1994

that included acts of murder, attempted murder, solicitation to commit murder, robbery, witness tampering and narcotics distribution. Twelve of the defendants were also charged in a separate conspiracy since 1994 to distribute wholesale quantities of powder and crack cocaine, and marijuana. The indictment seeks forfeiture of \$1.25 million in alleged narcotics proceeds and 24 firearms, including various handguns, shotguns and semi-automatic rifles. A total of 77 firearms have been seized during the course of the investigation, officials said.

“This is the first street gang indictment in Chicago in many years that charges specific acts of murder under the federal RICO statute,” said Patrick J. Fitzgerald, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois. “We believe that this case will significantly impair the Insane Deuces gang and reduce the murder and mayhem that placed Aurora under siege in 2002. Since then, together with our state and local partners, we have launched a series of investigations that have helped ease the grip of gang-related gun violence and restored safety in our neighborhoods.”

The indictment charges various defendants with participating in specific acts of violence, which effectively increases the maximum penalty they face, if convicted of racketeering conspiracy, from 20 years in prison to a maximum of life in prison for all but one of the defendants. The indictment contains the following alleged acts of violence:

- Jan. 20, 2002** – the attempted murder of Victims A and B;
- Feb. 12, 2002** – the murder of Robert Perez;
- Aug. 11, 2002** – the murder of David Lazcano;
- Sept. 19, 2002** – the attempted murder of Victim C;
- Sept. 28, 2002** – the attempted murder of Victim D;
- Oct. 16, 2002** – the murder of David Morales;
- Nov. 17, 2002** – the murder of Urbel Valdez;
- May 11, 2003** – the attempted murder of Victim E;
- August 2002** – conspiracy to murder Victim F; and
- September - November 2002** – conspiracy to murder Victim G.

Mr. Fitzgerald announced the charges together with Andrew L. Traver, Special Agent-in-

Charge of the Chicago Office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and

Explosives; John A. Barsanti, Kane County State's Attorney; Aurora Police Chief William J. Lawler; and U.S. Marshal Kim R. Widup. Also participating in the investigation were the police departments in Elgin, North Aurora, Carol Stream, Montgomery, the Kane and Kendall County Sheriff Departments, and the Illinois State Police. The investigation was conducted under the umbrella of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force.

"The arrests of these gang members in Aurora and throughout the Chicago area should serve stern notice to gang members everywhere that if they commit acts of violence anywhere, whether it be in the city or in a suburban community, we will find them, pursue them and remove them. There is no safe place to hide from the relentless pursuit of justice," Mr. Traver said.

Chief Lawler said: "Today's operation illustrates that, in order to adequately fight street gangs and the violence they impart, resources from all levels of law enforcement must be utilized.

For many years, the Aurora Police Department has teamed with our federal partners in order to address our concerns on the city's streets and they will continue to do so for years to come."

All 16 defendants were charged in the racketeering conspiracy count with being members of the Insane Deuce Nation street gang which allegedly functioned as a criminal organization or "enterprise" under the RICO law.

The indictment charges that the gang was operated and supervised by an overall leader known by several names, including the "Prince," the "Executive Director," and the "Deuce of Deuces." The Prince was assisted by a senior level of leaders known as the "Nation Committee" or "Main Table," which was comprised of high-ranking gang leaders from different local chapters, or "factions," located throughout northern Illinois, including Chicago, Aurora and Elgin. Along with the Nation Committee, the Prince was responsible for setting the gang's policies, approving all significant actions, resolving disputes within the ranks and between the Insane Deuces and other criminal organizations.

The indictment alleges that **Bolivar Benabe**, 40 (dob 6-17-65), of 4035 N. Sacramento, basement unit, Chicago – as the highest-ranking member outside prison – was responsible for overseeing activities of all factions of the Insane Deuces.

The Aurora faction of the gang allegedly operated through three levels of

membership: Seniors, Juniors and Shorties. The Seniors were older members of the gang who exercised reduced power and who were exempt from paying dues. In June 2002, the Nation Committee “rolled back” the status of various gang members from Seniors to Juniors, and required them to once again assume active leadership positions within the Insane Deuces. The Juniors were the leaders of the Aurora faction who made the day-to-day decisions and who, along with others, ordered Shorties to commit violent acts against rival gang members and others.

Among the Juniors, according to the indictment, **Juan Juarez**, 30 (9-11-75), of 9 Sandra Ct., Sandwich, held the position of “Regional Seat,” responsible for overseeing the factions of the gang in Chicago suburbs, including Aurora and Elgin. **Julian Salazar**, 28 (9-28-77), who is in federal custody and formerly of Aurora, was the ranking member of the Aurora faction and held the position of “Governor” or “First Seat.” **Miguel Martinez**, 25 (10-11-79), who’s last known address was in Aurora, was the second ranking member and held the position of “Lieutenant Governor” or “Second Seat.” **Mariano Morales**, 36 (7-18-69), of 560 East Gunderson, Apt. 208, Carol Stream, was the third ranking member who held the position of “Enforcer.” Other Junior members were **Arturo Barbosa**, 29 (5-1-76), of 271 High St., Apt. 2, Aurora; **Harold Crowder**, 28 (5-19-77), of Aurora, who is in state custody, **Miguel Rodriguez**, 37 (5-19-68), of Aurora who is in federal custody, **Steven Perez**, 29 (1-31-76), of 10 Pasadena Dr., Oswego; **Brian Hernandez**, 23 (12-31-81), of 203 Laurel Dr., Unit B, North Aurora, who was responsible for overseeing the Shorty members, and **Lionel Lechuga**, 36 (8-14-69), of 316 Evans, Aurora.

The Shorties, who were often juveniles, comprised the youngest members of the gang, and were responsible for carrying out the orders of the Juniors. The Shorties were similarly divided into positions of authority, the indictment alleges, with **Fernando Delatorre**, 20 (10-3-84), of Aurora, who is in federal custody, the ranking Shorty member known as the “First Seat Shorty” or “Chief of the Shorties.” **Romel Handley**, 21 (5-30-84), of 1231 Coventry Pl., Apt. B, Aurora, was the second ranking Shorty member, known as the “Second Seat Shorty.” Other alleged Shorty members were **Christian Guzman**, 21 (1-5-84), of Aurora, **Akeem Horton**, 22(4-30-83), of Aurora, both of whom are in custody in Kane County, and **Steven Susinka**, 21 (11-28-83), of Aurora, who is in state custody.

As part of the conspiracy, the indictment alleges that the Insane Deuces operated through a series of bylaws and policies, which the members called “Layas.” Members also attended regular meetings, known as “juntas,” at which they discussed and planned gang-related activity. The gang initiated members through the practice of “beat-ins,” in which new members had to endure physical assaults committed by fellow gang members. To enforce discipline within the gang, the Insane Deuces engaged in a system of “violations,” in which the defendants and others attempted to murder, conspired to murder, and physically beat and threatened any members who violated rules, questioned authority, or posed a threat to the gang’s leaders or purposes.

To perpetuate the criminal enterprise and to maintain and extend its power, the indictment alleges, the Insane Deuces committed violent acts known as “missions,” including murder, attempted murder, aggravated battery, intimidation, and assault, against rival gang members and witnesses to criminal activities who posed a threat to the gang or jeopardized its operations. Gang members were required to go on such missions, received standing orders to shoot rival gang members, and were instructed to retaliate for gang-related attacks upon other members and associates, according to the indictment.

As part of the conspiracy, the indictment alleges that gang members stole automobiles and acquired stolen automobiles, which they referred to as “steamers,” to use during missions. The “steamers” were obtained from various sources, including members of the Insane Deuces operating in Elgin, who stole cars and sold them to other gang members for cash, firearms, and/or narcotics.

The Insane Deuces allegedly earned profits for their members and regularly financed their activities through theft and robbery and drug-trafficking. Gang leaders operated a “Caja” system, maintaining a monetary stash into which members paid requisite monthly dues and which, in turn, the gang used to bail fellow gang members out of jail, send money to incarcerated gang members, and purchase and sell firearms and narcotics.

If convicted of racketeering conspiracy, all defendants except one face a maximum penalty of life in prison (defendant Romel Handley faces a maximum of 20 years in prison) and a \$250,000 fine. The narcotics conspiracy count against 12 defendants carries a maximum penalty of life in prison and a \$4 million fine. Other counts in the indictment,

including violent crimes in aid of racketeering, against certain defendants carry additional penalties ranging from five years to life in prison. Note, however, that the Court will determine the appropriate sentence to be imposed under the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The government is being represented in Federal Court by Assistant United States Attorneys Patrick Pope and Jack Blakey, and Kane County Assistant State's Attorney and Criminal Chief Jody Gleason who will be designated as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

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