



**U.S. Attorney's Office**

Eastern District of Louisiana  
500 Poydras Street, Suite B210  
New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

***JIM LETTEN, UNITED STATES ATTORNEY***

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Contact: Immediate Release  
Kathy English June 23, 2006  
(504) 680-3068

**NEW ORLEANS MAN CONVICTED FOR  
MURDER OF FEDERAL WITNESS**

**NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA** - Jim Letten, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana, Mark Chait, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and William Renton, Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, announced that a federal jury convicted **TERRENCE LASH** of being involved in a large scale drug conspiracy and for hiring a "hitman" to kill a federal witness. The jury deliberated for approximately three hours after listening to federal prosecutors present their case over the last two weeks. During the trial, the federal government presented the testimony of several co-conspirators who testified that **TERRENCE LASH** was a large scale drug dealer who was an integral part of a very large drug conspiracy. Prosecutors were able to prove that **TERRENCE LASH** joined this conspiracy back in 1996 when he was in the federal penitentiary serving his first federal drug sentence. During that time, he met Rahsaan Johnson and they agreed to sell drugs together once they were released. Shortly after their release from prison they were true to form and started selling cocaine on the streets of New Orleans. In 1998, **LASH** was arrested by members of the New Orleans Police Department and charged with possession with the intent to distribute crack cocaine. After serving another stint in jail, **LASH** resumed his dealing with Johnson upon his release. Federal prosecutors were able to prove that Johnson was shipping large amounts of cocaine (50 -75 kilograms) every week to New Orleans from Houston. **LASH** was part of the New Orleans contingent who would receive this cocaine and resell it on the streets of the city.

Back in 2002, ATF special agents started an investigation into the murder of Zachary Marcel. During this investigation, ATF agents learned that Eddie Fatheree and Tamira Durand were responsible for the murder. Marcel was killed because he had robbed Fatheree of drugs and money. Both Eddie Fatheree and Tamira Durand pled guilty to

being involved in the murder. They also pled guilty to being involved in a drug conspiracy and identified **TERRENCE LASH** as their source of supply for cocaine. It was during this investigation that Demetra Norse was shot and killed (June 4, 2003), approximately two months after she testified before the federal grand jury. NOPD investigated this case and issued an arrest warrant for Tarik Smith based on an eyewitness identification.

In July of 2003, DEA agents in Houston, Texas arrested John Melvin Gage as he attempted to transport 77 kilograms of cocaine to the New Orleans area. Based on his cooperation and other investigative leads, DEA agents were able to arrest several other individuals that were involved in the drug conspiracy. As each member of the conspiracy was arrested and cooperated with law enforcement officials it became clear that these large shipments of cocaine that were being brought in from Houston to New Orleans were bound for **TERRENCE LASH** and his associates. During this investigation cooperating co-conspirators informed agents that Lash had hired a hitman to kill Norse because she was a witness. These cooperators also told federal agents that Tarik Smith had nothing to do with the murder of Norse and that he was wrongly accused. In an effort to find out the truth, federal agents had a cooperating co-conspirator wear a wire to secretly record **TERRENCE LASH** while he spoke about the details of the Norse murder. During this conversation, **LASH** admitted that he hired Donald Sylvester to kill Norse. Lash stated that he drove through the neighborhood, located Norse, and then called Sylvester to describe what she was wearing. He then stated that he then met with Sylvester and gave him the a gun. Sylvester then found Norse walking down the street with her friend, produced a .45 caliber handgun, and shot and killed her. **LASH** went on to say that he paid Sylvester \$7,000.00 dollars in cash to kill Norse. This information was corroborated by the co-conspirators as well as the phone records of both Lash and Sylvester. **LASH** also stated on the tape that the police had arrested the wrong man (Tarik Smith) in connection with Norse's murder.

Based on the information learned from the tape, federal DEA agents arrested Donald Sylvester, who matched the physical description that was given by the eyewitnesses to the Norse murder. He has been indicted by a federal grand jury and will stand trial in November for his role in this murder.

The jury of eight women and four men convicted **LASH** of all seven counts of the indictment. He will be sentenced as an habitual offender and will receive a life sentence. His sentencing will be held later this year.

United States Jim Letten wanted to specifically thank the special agents with the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, who participated in this long investigation. This case was prosecuted by AUSAs Matthew Coman and Maurice Landrieu.