

# NEWS



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### **FEDERAL DEFENDANT SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT FOR COCAINE CONSPIRACY AND MURDER OF A FEDERAL WITNESS; TO DATE, 30 FEDERAL DEFENDANTS IN TWO CASES HAVE BEEN CONVICTED ON FEDERAL CHARGES**

**NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA** - Jim Letten, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Louisiana; David G. Harper, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); and William Renton, Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration; along with James Bernazzani, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation; and Warren C. Riley, Superintendent, New Orleans Police Department, announced today that United States District Judge Jay C. Zainey sentenced **TERRENCE LASH**, 33, of

New Orleans, Louisiana, to life imprisonment for narcotics trafficking, firearms violations and the murder of a federal witness.

**LASH's** conviction and life sentence brings to thirty (30) the number of defendants investigated, arrested, prosecuted and convicted for large-scale drug distribution and related offenses during the last two years arising out of two separate but related drug conspiracies on the streets of New Orleans.

On June 23, 2006, following a two-week trial, a federal jury returned guilty verdicts on all seven (7) counts of the indictment against **LASH**. The indictment charged **LASH** with conspiring to distribute more than five (5) kilograms of cocaine hydrochloride between 1994 and 2003, conspiring to use firearms in furtherance of the narcotics conspiracy, the murder of Demetra Norse, and with being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Evidence adduced at trial showed that **LASH** and several others participated in a cocaine trafficking operation that funneled approximately 800 kilograms of cocaine into the New Orleans area. **LASH** operated as a New Orleans distributor within this operation who typically received and distributed dozens of kilograms of cocaine on a bi-weekly basis.

Evidence adduced at trial also showed that, in relation to these cocaine trafficking activities, **LASH** hired Donald Sylvester to murder Demetra Norse. Sylvester is charged with June 4, 2003 murder of Norse in New Orleans, Louisiana and is currently awaiting trial which is set to take place in June, 2007.

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Speaking to today's court proceeding, U. S. Attorney Letten added: "Today's life sentence is the result of the outstanding work and dedication of Special Agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, as well as federal prosecutors. To date, thirty (30) drug dealers - some of them highly dangerous predators - have been taken off the streets, prosecuted, and convicted for serious federal crimes in just two separate but related cases, as a result of the tremendous partnership between these fine federal agencies and out partners in the New Orleans Police Department. These compelling results, which make our streets safer is evidence of the tireless dedication of our federal law enforcement professionals and our local partners, and represents but a fraction of the hundreds of drug offenders who have been taken off the streets by our partnership over the past two years."

ATF Special Agent in Charge David G. Harper offered his thanks to the special agents and prosecutors who brought this investigation to a successful conclusion. He also reaffirmed ATF's commitment to using all available resources to reduce violent crime in our communities.

As to Count 1 (the cocaine conspiracy), **LASH** was sentenced life imprisonment. As to Count 2 (the conspiracy to use firearms), **LASH** was sentenced to twenty (20) years imprisonment. As to Count 3, 4, 5 and 6 (the murder of Demetra Norse), **LASH** was sentenced life imprisonment. And as to Count 7 (felon in possession of a firearm), **LASH** was sentenced to ten (10) years imprisonment. As **LASH's** life sentence resulted from the successful conviction of nine (9) individuals to date, all members of a single violent, lethal drug gang, in which eight (8) additional defendants investigated in 2003 and convicted between 2004 and present, have been brought to justice. Those convicted defendants include the following:

- 1) John Melvin Gage-Pled guilty to conspiring to distribute more than 150 kilograms of cocaine-awaiting sentencing;
- 2) Shelton Roberts-Pled guilty to conspiring to distribute more than 150 kilograms of cocaine-awaiting sentencing;
- 3) Derrick Diggs-Pled guilty to conspiring to distribute more than 150 kilograms of cocaine-awaiting sentencing;
- 4) Larry Joseph-Pled guilty to conspiring to distribute more than 150 kilograms of cocaine-awaiting sentencing;

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5) Donald Murphy-Pled guilty to conspiring to distribute more than 150 kilograms of cocaine-sentenced to 216 months imprisonment;

6) Tamira Durand-Pled guilty to conspiring to distribute more than 5 kilograms of cocaine and aiding and abetting Eddie Fatheree in the murder of Zachary Marcel-awaiting sentencing;

7) Eddie Fatheree-Pled guilty to conspiring to distribute more than 5 kilograms of cocaine and the murder of Zachary Marcel-awaiting sentencing; and

8) Rahsaan Johnson-Pled guilty to conspiring to distribute more than 150 kilograms of cocaine, conspiracy to money lauder (1956 (h)) and the murder of Wayne Julian-awaiting sentencing.

One defendant, Ronald Sylvester remains under indictment, charged with the murder of a federal witness. He is scheduled for trial in July, 2007.

All of the convictions of nine related defendants and today's life sentence of **LASH** is a result of investigation by Special Agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the New Orleans Police Department. This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Matthew Coman and Maurice Landrieu.

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