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**PALMER PARK FELON EXILED TO OVER 27 YEARS IN PRISON
FOR POSSESSING A GUN**

*Attempted to Flee Police in a High Speed Chase Through Residential Neighborhood
and Wrong Way on Busy Highway; Crashed Head On Into SUV Stopped at a Light*

Greenbelt, Maryland - U.S. District Judge Peter J. Messitte sentenced Ray A. Blanchard, age 38, of Palmer Park, Maryland today to 327 months in prison followed by five years of supervised release for being felon in possession of a gun, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

According to testimony at his three day trial, on March 14, 2007, Prince George's County police officers attempted to stop a vehicle driven by Blanchard because it was missing a front license plate and had crossed the center double yellow line in Landover, Maryland. Rather than pulling over, Blanchard drove through a stop sign without stopping, turned onto Route 202 (Landover Road) and then onto the Martin Luther King (MLK) Highway. After driving a few blocks, Blanchard briefly stopped the vehicle on the wrong side of the median and threw what appeared to be rocks of crack cocaine out the driver's side window. A subsequent effort to recover the items was unsuccessful. Blanchard then drove off down the wrong side of the median on MLK Highway into on-coming traffic. As the officers, on the right side of the median, continued their high-speed pursuit of the defendant, Blanchard drove at high speeds through a residential neighborhood, ignoring several stop signs, until he returned to MLK Highway, this time driving on the right side of the road. Blanchard then tried to turn off MLK Highway onto Hubbard Road, but he crossed the center line and crashed head-on into an SUV waiting at the traffic light. Air bags deployed and the SUV was spun around almost 180 degrees, but no one was seriously injured in the crash.

After the crash Blanchard left the vehicle on foot, but was quickly arrested. Officers searched his vehicle and recovered a loaded 9 mm semi-automatic handgun with the safety off, an extra loaded 9 mm magazine, and a loaded .45 caliber semi-automatic handgun. Officers also recovered .6 grams of crack cocaine; .5 grams of marijuana; a digital scale with cocaine residue; a spent 9mm shell casing; and a black container with seven pills. The front driver's side door of the Tahoe had a bullet hole caused by a firearm being placed close to the door and fired from inside the Tahoe.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Prince George's County Police Department for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein commended Assistant United States Attorney Steven M. Dunne, who prosecuted the case.