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MONDAY, MAY 4, 2009
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MS-13 LEADER SENTENCED TO 60 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR RACKETEERING CONSPIRACY, ARMED ROBBERY AND GUN VIOLATION

Defendant Participated in Murders of Rival Gang Members

GREENBELT, Md. - U.S. District Judge Deborah K. Chasanow today sentenced Victor Ramirez, a/k/a "Mousey," age 30, a native of El Salvador who resided in Hyattsville, Md., to 60 years in prison, followed by five years of supervised release, announced Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division Lanny A. Breuer and U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

Ramirez was convicted in November 2008, after a four-week jury trial, of conspiracy to conduct and participate in racketeering enterprise activities of the gang MS-13, including three murders and an attempted murder; armed robbery of a business; and using and carrying a gun in furtherance of a crime of violence.

"Victor Ramirez' mission was to boost the level of MS-13's criminal activities on the streets of Maryland," said Assistant Attorney General of the Criminal Division Lanny A. Breuer. "Today's sentence is a warning to gang members with similar aspirations that we won't tolerate this sort of criminal behavior in our neighborhoods."

"The evidence proved that MS-13 sent Victor Ramirez to Maryland from El Salvador as part of a plan to strengthen the MS-13 gang and expand the gang's criminal activity," said U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein.

According to testimony presented during trial, Ramirez was a leader in the Teclas Locos Salvatruchos (TLS) clique of MS-13 in El Salvador, and then in Maryland. During the trial, the jury viewed a video taken in the Quezaltepeque prison in El Salvador that showed Ramirez flashing MS-13 gang signs and displaying a "Mara Salvatrucha" tattoo across his abdomen. Ramirez admitted to fellow gang members in Maryland that he had been a "first word" (or clique leader) within the clique in El Salvador. After arriving in Maryland, Ramirez represented the TLS clique at MS-13 meetings in Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia.

Witnesses testified that Ramirez came to the U.S. from El Salvador through Mexico, and that he had arrived in Maryland with a fellow gang member. Both Ramirez and an MS-13 leader from El Salvador told witnesses that Ramirez had been sent to Maryland to strengthen MS-13 in Maryland, ensure that MS-13 rules were being strictly followed as established by the gang leaders in El Salvador, and in particular, to make the TLS clique in Maryland more violent. In addition, once he arrived in Maryland, Ramirez was instrumental in implementing "The Program," which was a scheme to rob and extort prostitution houses and other illegal businesses in order to collect funds for MS-13.

Witnesses testified that on Oct. 9, 2005, Ramirez and other MS-13 members, including co-defendant Eris Marchante-Rivas, attended a meeting of the TLS clique in Prince George's County. During that meeting, one of the international leaders of the TLS clique spoke to the gang members by cellular telephone from a jail in El Salvador. After the meeting, Ramirez and fellow gang members drove to meet a number of gang members from other MS-13 cliques and discussed their plans to shoot rival gang members that day. Ramirez, Marchante-Rivas and other gang members went to the 5600 block of Quintana Street in Riverdale, Md., to kill rival gang members. Once they arrived, Ramirez and other gang members left their vehicles and approached Jose Cerda, Edward Trujillo and another person, all of whom were standing in front of a house on Quintana Street. Cerda and Trujillo were shot and killed by MS-13 gang members and the third individual was wounded by a gunshot.

Witnesses also testified about the murder of Alejandro Rubi-Martinez in Langley Park, Md., on Oct. 23, 2005. Ramirez was present in Langley Park during a discussion about an individual that they suspected of being a rival gang member. Ramirez asked a gang member to drive Ramirez to his apartment, where Ramirez retrieved a handgun. Ramirez later handed this gun to an MS-13 member who shot Rubi-Martinez in Langley Park that day. A witness testified that he drove with Ramirez away from this meeting of MS-13 members just before the shooting.

Witnesses also testified about Ramirez's leadership role in implementing the "Program" of robbing and extorting brothels in Maryland. A witness testified that he accompanied Ramirez on a number of occasions when they robbed brothels and raped the prostitutes. Ramirez decided to rob the brothel on Blueridge Avenue in Wheaton, Md., and brought a .38 caliber revolver to use during the robbery. On Nov. 14, 2005, Ramirez, co-defendant Juan Jiminez-Hernandez, and three other MS-13 gang members from the TLS clique drove to the brothel. Once inside the apartment, the MS-13 members brandished the gun that Ramirez had brought, tied up and robbed the doorman and two other men who arrived later, and raped the prostitute at gunpoint.

Detectives and Montgomery County police officers testified that they arrived at the apartment that day after tracking a carjacking suspect to that location. A female plainclothes detective knocked on the door to the apartment, posing as a neighbor. The MS-13 members inside opened the door and attempted to grab the detective, not knowing that a number of officers and detectives were lined up in the hallway outside the door waiting to enter the apartment. Witnesses testified that Ramirez was one of the three men at the doorway who attempted to grab the female detective. Law enforcement witnesses further testified that they recovered a handgun on the floor of the apartment and some of the prostitute's jewelry in Ramirez's pockets. A fifth gang member, who had remained in the car, attempted to warn the other gang members about the arrival of the police, but was unsuccessful. He fled in the car, but was later apprehended by police.

Eris Marchante-Rivas, also known as "Strayboy," age 24, of Hyattsville, Md., was sentenced to 30 years in prison on Jan. 12, 2009, and Juan Jiminez-Hernandez, also known as "Sniroon," age 23, of Beltsville, Md., was sentenced on Nov. 10, 2008, to 12 ½ years in prison, followed by five years of supervised release.

Assistant Attorney General Lanny A. Breuer and U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein commended the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the FBI; the Prince

George's County Police Department; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the Montgomery County Police Department; the Howard County Police Department; the Maryland National Capital Park Police; the Maryland State Police; Prince George's County State's Attorney Glenn F. Ivey and Montgomery County State's Attorney John McCarthy and their offices for their work in this investigation and prosecution.

Mr. Breuer and Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Chan Park and Robert K. Hur, and David Jaffe, a Trial Attorney from the Justice Department's Gang Unit, who prosecuted the case.

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