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**WILLIE MITCHELL SENTENCED TO 9 LIFE TERMS FOR RACKETEERING
CONSPIRACY ENCOMPASSING FIVE MURDERS AND DRUG TRAFFICKING**

Drug Operations Promoted Rap Music Business

Baltimore, Maryland - U.S. District Judge Andre M. Davis sentenced Willie Edward Mitchell, a/k/a Bo, age 31, of Baltimore, Maryland today to nine life terms in prison plus 60 years in prison consecutive to the life sentences for racketeering conspiracy under the RICO statute, encompassing five murders committed in 2002 in Baltimore and Randallstown, narcotics trafficking and other offenses, announced United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein.

“People will be a lot safer because Willie Mitchell, one of Baltimore’s most violent criminals, will never return to the streets,” said U.S. Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein. “Racketeering cases are time-consuming, but they make a dramatic contribution to public safety.”

According to evidence presented at the nine week trial, Willie Mitchell; Shelton Lee Harris, a/k/a Rock, Little Rock, Hard Rock, age 25, of Baltimore, Maryland; Shelly Wayne Martin a/k/a Wayne, Weaze, Weazy, age 32, of Randallstown, Maryland; and Shawn Earl Gardner, a/k/a Goo, age 31, of Baltimore, Maryland, were members of a violent criminal organization which operated in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Pennsylvania and elsewhere. From 1996 to August 2006, the defendants conspired to commit murder, armed robbery and home-invasion robbery in furtherance of the racketeering enterprise.

Evidence at trial showed that Mitchell stabbed and wounded three members of a rival drug gang known as the Rice organization at a nightclub on February 18, 2002. This created rumors that the Rice organization put out a contract to kill Mitchell. Mitchell believed that Oliver McCaffity had taken the contract and decided to have McCaffity killed by Harris. Mitchell and Harris were convicted of the double homicide of Oliver McCaffity and Lisa Brown on the night of February 27-28, 2002 in the Finney Avenue area of Baltimore City. Brown happened to be with McCaffity that night.

Mitchell and Harris were also convicted of the double homicide and armed robbery of Darryl Wyche and Anthony Wyche on the night of March 24-25, 2002 in the Wabash Avenue area of Baltimore City, after the brothers arrived for a meeting orchestrated by Mitchell. A large quantity of cocaine and money was stolen from the Wyches’ car. In both of these double murders, the victims were shot to death while they sat in the front seat of automobiles.

Trial evidence showed that these crimes, as well as armed robberies and narcotics trafficking offenses involving crack cocaine, cocaine, marijuana and heroin, were carried out from 1994 to August 2006 in furtherance of the racketeering enterprise. Also part of the racketeering enterprise was a company called Shake Down Entertainment, Ltd., incorporated in December 2000 with Mitchell as its resident agent. Shake Down Entertainment produced and promoted rap music recordings. One of the purposes of the criminal enterprise was to promote rap music recordings and performances.

Another purpose of the criminal enterprise was to prevent and obstruct the arrest and prosecution of gang members through witness intimidation and disruption of court proceedings.

Defendants Harris and Gardner face mandatory life sentences for the murders. Harris, Gardner and Martin face maximum sentences of life in prison for the racketeering charge and conspiracy to distribute narcotics. Harris also faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison for witness retaliation. Judge Davis has scheduled sentencing for Harris, Gardner and Martin on March 20, 26 and 27, 2009, respectively.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein praised the Baltimore City Police Department, the Baltimore County Police Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, U.S. Marshal's Service, Maryland State Police and several Pennsylvania state law enforcement agencies for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant United States Attorneys Robert R. Harding and Michael C. Hanlon, who prosecuted the case.