



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

**Frank J. Magill,
United States Attorney**

David Anderson, Public Affairs Specialist
(612) 664-5684; cell: (612) 730-2251

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, Oct. 28, 2008

Ringleader, 1 other sentenced for distributing crack cocaine in Duluth

The head of a Duluth drug ring, along with one additional defendant, were sentenced today in federal court for their roles in one of the Duluth region's largest known drug operations to date. The defendants participated in a cocaine and crack cocaine ring that was responsible for the sale and distribution of 40-60 kilograms of the drugs in the Duluth and Superior, Wisc., areas.

Sentenced today in Minneapolis by United States District Court Judge James Rosenbaum were: Bernard Vann, 42, Duluth, and Angelo M. Castleman, 24, Duluth. Vann was sentenced to 126 months in prison and five years supervised release on one count of aiding and abetting in the distribution of 50 or more grams of cocaine base, commonly known as crack cocaine. Judge Rosenbaum ruled that Vann was the leader of the drug ring.

Castleman was sentenced to 60 months in prison and five years supervised release on one count of distribution of cocaine base.

Vann and Castleman were indicted, along with 25 other members of the ring, in July 2007. According to federal search warrants filed in the case, law enforcement in the Duluth area had been investigating a cocaine and crack cocaine distribution ring for the past two years. Vann, the owner of Hot Gear Cold Grills & Beauty Supply, located on First Street in Duluth, was the primary focus of that investigation, and used the store to deliver the drugs.

"We will continue the exceptional partnership that we have with the Lake Superior Drug and Gang Task Force to remove those who threaten the quality of life in the Twin Ports area, which has become a very uncomfortable place to be an armed drug dealer" said Bernard Zapor, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

"This case involved a significant amount of illegal drugs being trafficked out of Duluth," said Duluth Police Chief Gordon Ramsey. "Additionally, the violence and other related criminal acts associated with the suspects in this case was astounding. We are proud of the work of our

investigators in this lengthy case. Through a strong working relationship with the ATF and the U.S. Attorney's Office, we will close the chapter on this case."

"The arrest and prosecution of Bernard Vann and others in this distribution ring are a testament to the dedicated efforts of the Duluth Police Department, the ATF and our other law enforcement partners," said U.S. Attorney Frank J. Magill. "Today's sentences send a strong message that our office will aggressively prosecute those who commit federal crimes in Greater Minnesota."

Twenty-two other defendants have already been sentenced in connection with this case, eight of which were sentenced earlier this month. Sidney Jermaine Boyd, 28, Duluth, was sentenced to 92 months in prison and five years supervised release on one count of distribution of cocaine base. He was sentenced Oct. 24 in Minneapolis.

Quincy Jonathan Mason, 26, St. Paul, and Roynell Taylor, 24, Duluth, are scheduled to be sentenced Oct. 30 in Minneapolis. Mason pleaded guilty on Dec. 12, 2007, to one count of aiding and abetting in the distribution of 50 or more grams of cocaine base. Taylor pleaded guilty on Oct. 29, 2007, to one count of distribution of cocaine base. The sentencing dates for the remaining two defendants have not been scheduled.

Cocaine is a powerfully addictive stimulant that directly affects the brain, and crack cocaine is the free-base form of the drug. This form comes in a rock crystal that can be heated and its vapors smoked. The term "crack" refers to the crackling sound heard when it is heated.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Lake Superior Drug and Gang Task Force, the Duluth Police Department and the ATF, with assistance from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Christian S. Wilton and W. Anders Folk.