

NEWS

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Assistant U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 12, 2010

Four Members of the Fruit Town Brims Bloods Gang Indicted for Kidnapping and Weapons Possession

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NEWARK, N.J. – Four Paterson, New Jersey-based members of the Fruit Town Brims (“FTB”) set of the Bloods street gang, which originated in California, have been indicted for the April 11, 2005, kidnapping of a rival Paterson gang member, United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

The Indictment charges four purported members of the Brims: two “status” members, Torien Brooks, 29, and Haleek State, 25; and two members and associates, John Benning, 27, and Larry Mayo, 27, all of Paterson, New Jersey. The defendants are charged with a series of violent crimes in aid of racketeering stemming from the 2005 kidnapping of M.M., as the victim is identified in the federal Indictment unsealed today in Newark federal court. According to the Indictment, the defendants conspired to kidnap and murder M.M. for the purpose of gaining entrance to, and maintaining and increasing position in, the FTB Set.

Benning was arrested on the then-sealed Indictment Friday evening by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (“FBI”). The other three defendants were already in federal or state custody on other charges. All four defendants appeared this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Esther Salas, who ordered the defendants detained.

The Indictment describes the racketeering activities of the Fruit Town Brims, including the set’s development in Los Angeles, California., its involvement in narcotics trafficking and robberies, and its requirement of retaliation against people who “disrespect” the set itself or the Bloods generally.

Each of the defendants is charged with one count of conspiracy to commit murder and kidnapping and one count of kidnapping – all in aid of racketeering, as well as a federal weapons possession offense. If convicted, the defendants face a maximum potential penalty of 10 years in prison on the conspiracy charge; life in prison on the kidnapping charge; and a minimum of seven years in prison and a maximum of life in prison on the weapons charge. Each count also carries a maximum fine of \$250,000 or twice the gross gain or loss from the offense.

In determining an actual sentence, the judge to whom the case is assigned would, upon a conviction, consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant’s criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, would not be bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation from the Safe Streets and Violent Crimes Task Force out of Woodland Park, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael B. Ward – with special recognition to the Paterson Police Department, under the direction of Police Chief James Wittig – as well as the Passaic County Prosecutor’s Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Camelia M. Valdes.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Melissa L. Jampol, of the U.S. Attorney’s Criminal Division in Newark.

The charges and allegations in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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Defense Counsel:

Torien Brooks – Thomas F. X. Dunn, Esq., Glenn Rock, New Jersey

Haleek State – Alexander W. Booth, Jr., Esq., Union City, New Jersey

Larry Mayo – Donna R. Newman, Esq., New York, New York

John Benning – Michael V. Calabro, Esq., Newark, New Jersey