



U.S. Department of Justice

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## PRESS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Friday, July 22, 2011

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<http://www.justice.gov/usao/dc/news/2011/apr/news.html>

### **Three Gang Members Sentenced to Prison Terms For Crimes Arising From Assault - One Threatened to Decapitate a Potential Witness -**

WASHINGTON - Three members of a street gang have been sentenced to prison terms for crimes arising from a June 2010 assault against two brothers in a Northwest Washington apartment building, U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. announced today.

The men were convicted by a jury in April 2011 following a trial in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. All three are known to be members of the LeDroit Park Crew, a violent criminal street gang that operates in the LeDroit Park neighborhood of Northwest Washington.

Lawrence Smith, also known as Weezy, 25, and Jeffrey Gaston, also known as Feetz, 23, were convicted of 17 counts, including conspiracy, kidnapping while armed, armed robbery, felony threats and various weapons-related charges. Lonnell Smith, 28, also known as Fats, the brother of Lawrence Smith, was convicted of obstruction of justice and felony threats. All three defendants are from Washington, D.C.

Earlier this month, the Honorable Ronna L. Beck sentenced Lawrence Smith to a 19-year prison term and Gaston to 12 years of incarceration. Today she sentenced Lonnell Smith to three years in prison.

The convictions stemmed from a June 14, 2010 attack against two brothers who were staying in an apartment in the 200 block of W Street NW. That day, one of the brothers spoke to Lawrence Smith about purchasing a cell phone from him. The victims subsequently met Lawrence Smith, Gaston and a third individual in a courtyard near the apartment. Lawrence Smith, Gaston and the third individual then lured them into the stairwell of a building.

Once inside, the assailants attacked both victims and took their wallets and cell phones. They also brandished firearms and threatened to kill the brothers if the victims told anyone what happened. Afterward, Lawrence Smith and the unidentified third perpetrator forced the younger

victim, a teenager, into another building in an attempt to take more money. The victim was able to escape and ran to Howard University Hospital where he received treatment for a broken jaw.

Several months later – while Lawrence Smith was awaiting trial on charges stemming from the attack – Lonnell Smith embarked upon a campaign of fear designed to prevent a woman who he believed might be a government witness from aiding the investigation. Among other things, he warned her that she had “better not be talking” and threatened to kill her by cutting her throat so deep that the only thing holding her head on would be “the skin on the back of her neck.”

In announcing the sentences, U.S. Attorney Machen praised those who worked on the case from the Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) including Detectives Kenny Arrington, Michael Pepperman, Adrian Owens, and Carol McConnell, and Officer Travis Weston. He also acknowledged the efforts of those who worked on the case from the U.S. Attorney’s Office, including Victim/Witness advocates James Brennan and Jennifer Allen; Victim Witness Security Specialists Debra Cannon and Shawn Slade; Paralegal Debra Smith; the entire Litigation Technical Support team, and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Katherine Sawyer and Steven Swaney, who prosecuted the case at trial.

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