



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

08/20/10

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MAN SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS IN PRISON FOR ROLE IN DRUG TRAFFICKING CONSPIRACY

ATLANTA, GA - MARLON BURTON, 38, of McDonough, Georgia, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Thomas W. Thrash to serve 30 years in federal prison on charges of conspiring to distribute drugs.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said, "Mr. Burton ran a sophisticated drug-trafficking organization for over 10 years while appearing to operate a legitimate contracting business in Atlanta. In reality, he was purchasing hundreds of kilograms of cocaine and other drugs from a Mexican drug cartel and then distributing the drugs to a variety of street-level dealers working for his organization."

Atlanta FBI Special Agent in Charge Brian D. Lamkin said, "The FBI, as part of the multi-agency Wilhelm Strike Force, is pleased to have this career offender off the streets. Burton had integrated himself into an international drug cartel and it was his role to bring that cartel's interests and product to the Atlanta area and beyond."

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: Beginning in November 2008, the Federal Bureau of Investigation in Atlanta began to investigate BURTON and his drug-trafficking organization. The investigation quickly revealed that BURTON led a large drug-distribution group that operated in Atlanta. BURTON, and those working for him, distributed wholesale quantities of cocaine, heroin and marijuana during the conspiracy.

In November 2008, the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia authorized the first wiretaps of telephones used by members of this organization. From November 2008 to December 2009, the FBI monitored telephones carried by its members, including BURTON. It quickly became apparent that BURTON was working with members of a Mexican drug trafficking cartel to obtain his drugs. In fact, it was not uncommon for BURTON to fly to Mexico himself to negotiate with cartel members concerning the price and quantity of drugs they would ship to him in Atlanta.

During the year-long investigation, BURTON was intercepted on the FBI wiretaps directing the distribution of hundreds of kilograms of cocaine and thousands of pounds of marijuana in the Atlanta area. In July 2009, for example, after intercepting coded talk from BURTON concerning a load of drugs, law enforcement stopped a tractor trailer in McDonough, Georgia carrying 40 kilograms of cocaine destined for BURTON.

BURTON also generated millions of dollars in drug proceeds from the sale of the narcotics. In an effort to launder profits from his drug dealing, BURTON funneled drug money through his construction company and the other businesses he owned. It is estimated that BURTON laundered over \$1.5 million in drug proceeds this way.

BURTON and eight other individuals were indicted in December 2009, on drug trafficking and money laundering charges relating to the drug conspiracy. PRINSTON CARTER was sentenced to 4 years in prison on May 18, 2010, for his role in the offense. DECARLO TATUM was sentenced to 11 years, 3 months imprisonment on July 28, 2010. RUFINO PRUNEDA received a 9 year prison sentence on August 18, 2010. INNOCENCIO OCHOA, DAVID RUIZ and OTONIEL HERRERA await sentencing in the case. MARCO DURON remains a fugitive.

BURTON was sentenced to 30 years in prison to be followed by 5 years of supervised release. The court also ordered the forfeiture of BURTON's vehicles and house in Clayton County, Georgia. BURTON was convicted of these charges on May 26, 2010, after entering his guilty plea with the District Court.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney Kurt R. Erskine prosecuted the case.

The U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta recommends parents and children learn about the dangers of drugs at the following web site: www.justthinktwice.com.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, United States Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.justice.gov/usao/gan.