



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Northern District of Illinois
Western Division*

Joseph C. Pedersen
Assistant U.S. Attorney
www.usdoj.gov/usao/iln

308 West State Street - Room 300
Rockford, Illinois 61101

PH: (815) 987-4444
FAX: (815) 987-4236

November 12, 2008

BELVIDERE RESIDENT PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO KIDNAP AND USING A FIREARM IN FURTHERANCE OF A VIOLENT CRIME

ROCKFORD – PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; ROBERT D. GRANT, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; and ANDREW L. TRAVER, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives; RICHARD A. MEYERS, Winnebago County Sheriff; and CHET EPPERSON, Rockford Police Chief, today made the following announcement:

LOUIS GUAJARDO, JR., (also known as “Papa Johns”) 21, of Belvidere, Illinois, pled guilty today in Rockford federal court to conspiracy to kidnap and use of a firearm during the kidnapping. Guajardo was charged with these offenses by an indictment returned on June 17, 2008. Also charged in the indictment were co-defendants Ernesto A. Martinez (“Nesto”), 19, and Christopher E. Toney (“Villain”), 18, both of Rockford, Illinois. Martinez and Toney’s cases are still pending.

In pleading guilty, Guajardo admitted that he was a member of the Latin Kings street gang and that late in the evening on April 10th and the early morning hours of April 11th, 2008, he met with several other members of the Latin Kings to plan a kidnapping in order to make money. According to the plea agreement, the defendants stole a blue minivan, then abducted the victim in the area of Wisconsin Avenue and Clifton Avenue in Rockford. Specifically, defendant helped push the victim into the stolen minivan, where he and a co-defendant tied the victim's legs and hands with duct tape. As stated in the plea agreement, the victim was then taken to the basement of a residence in Winnebago County where they intended to hold the victim for ransom and use the telephone to demand payment of the ransom. During the victim’s confinement, Guajardo and his co-conspirators repeatedly beat the victim. Shortly before 10:00 a.m. on April 11, 2008, while the kidnappers were upstairs and prior to a ransom call being made, the victim was able to get free of his restraints and escape from the house. Defendant admitted that he and the other kidnappers had all planned to receive portions of the ransom money.

Sentencing for Guajardo is scheduled for February 13, 2009, at 2:30p.m. Guajardo faces a maximum potential sentence of life imprisonment on Count One, the conspiracy to kidnap charge. On Count Two, the firearm charge, Guajardo faces a maximum potential sentence of life imprisonment and a statutory mandatory minimum sentence of 7 years, which is required to be consecutive to the sentence imposed on Count One. Guajardo also faces a fine of up to \$250,000 on each count and a term of supervised release of up to five years following imprisonment. The actual sentence will be determined by United States District Court Judge Frederick J. Kapala, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

Members of the public are reminded that a criminal indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are entitled to a fair trial at which time the government has the burden of proving their guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case was investigated by Rockford offices of the FBI and ATF, the Winnebago County Sheriff's Department and the Rockford Police Department. The case is being prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph C. Pedersen.

#