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Stephanie A. Finley
United States Attorney
(337) 262-6618
mona.hardwick@usdoj.gov

**GUILTY PLEAS ENTERED IN FEDERAL COURT FOR
INTIMIDATING STUDENTS BASED ON RACE**

Monroe, La. - U.S. Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced today that brothers Brian Wallis, 21, and James Lee Wallis Jr., 25, pleaded guilty to committing a hate crime by intentionally attempting to intimidate African-American students who were attending Beekman Junior High School in Beekman, Morehouse Parish, La. Tony L. Johnson, 30, previously pleaded guilty to the same offense.

During their respective plea hearings, each of the three defendants admitted that they hung a dead raccoon in a noose from a flagpole located in front of Beekman Junior High School. They each further admitted that they were angered by the school's new busing policy, which had increased the number of African-American children attending the school, and that they wanted to scare the children into leaving the school.

"Racially-motivated intimidation and violence is contrary to the American ideal of freedom, and it is particularly deplorable when it targets children," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Department of Justice remains committed to prosecuting hate crimes whenever and wherever they occur."

"All children should feel comfortable at school," said U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Louisiana Stephanie A. Finley. "This kind of activity has no place in our educational system or in our communities. We hope this case sends a strong message that this type of activity is unacceptable and criminal."

Sentencing for all three defendants is set for Dec. 6, 2011. At sentencing, Brian Wallis, James Lee Wallis Jr. and Johnson each face a maximum sentence of one year in prison.

This case was investigated by the FBI and is being prosecuted by Senior Litigation Counsel Mark Blumberg and Trial Attorney Christine M. Siscaretti of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division and Assistant United States Attorney Mary J. Mudrick of the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Louisiana.

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