

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 22, 2009

Another Member of Bank Robbery Gang Sentenced to 85 Years in Federal Prison

– FBI Agent Tragically Killed During Last Attempted Robbery –

(More)

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TRENTON – A second member of a bank robbery gang whose spree included an attempted robbery during which an FBI Special Agent was tragically killed was sentenced today to 85 years in federal prison, Acting U.S. Attorney Ralph J. Marra, Jr., announced.

U.S. District Judge Anne E. Thompson also ordered 30-year-old Wilfredo Berrios, aka “Robo Cop,” to pay \$90,445 in restitution to the banks he and the other members of the gang robbed between February and March 2007.

The sentencing of Berrios follows the sentencing on May 11 of the robbery gang leader, Francisco Herrera-Genao, 24, to 117 years in prison. Another co-defendant, Efrain Lynn, is scheduled to be sentenced on May 28.

There is no parole in the federal system, so the sentences of Berrios and Herrera-Genao are effectively life sentences.

“The tragic shame of this case will always be that someone was killed due to the violent, reckless crime spree that these men engaged in,” said Marra. “The lengthy prison sentences are an appropriate consequence.”

“The sentence rendered today against Mr. Berrios has demonstrated that our justice system, while not perfect, is a process that works and one in which we can all have faith,” said Weysan Dun, Special Agent In Charge of the FBI's Newark Field Office. “Like his partner in crime, Mr. Genao, Mr. Berrios will be likely imprisoned the rest of his life, thus affording him ample opportunity to consider the error of his ways. Our only regret is that FBI agent Barry Bush is no longer with us to see this matter through till the end. Each of the sentencings in this matter are a bittersweet victory.”

On Dec. 10, a jury convicted Berrios, Herrera-Genao and Lynn, all of New Brunswick, for the string of armed bank robberies in central New Jersey. A fourth defendant involved in the bank robbery crew, Michael Cruz, also of New Brunswick, pleaded guilty in January 2008 to the attempted robbery in Readington and another armed robbery preceding it. Cruz’s sentencing is now scheduled for June 8.

All four of the defendants had been suspected in the robberies. Berrios, Herrera-Genao and Cruz were being shadowed by an FBI task force which closed in on them on April 5, 2007, outside the PNC Bank branch on Route 22 in Readington. During the arrest of Cruz in a car nearby the bank, Special Agent Barry Lee Bush was shot and killed by an accidental discharge from the weapon of another agent.

Berrios was arrested at the PNC Bank in a car which held a .380 handgun, an SKS assault rifle and an MDL assault rifle, all of which had been used by the crew in prior bank

robberies. Herrera-Genao fled on foot from the car, and was arrested the next day. Lynn, who was not involved in the attempted robbery of the PNC Bank, was arrested later in the day on April 5 in New Brunswick.

In each of the bank robberies, the heavily armed suspects entered the banks and, in three cases, discharged weapons to intimidate employees and patrons and take control of the scene. In one case, a bullet that ricocheted off the ceiling grazed a customer's leg. In another instance, a fired bullet ricocheted into teller glass, shattered the glass and caused a bank employee to be struck in the face with glass and bullet fragments.

The case has been prosecuted by Charles B. McKenna, Chief of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division, and by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jacob T. Elberg.

Marra credited Special Agents of the FBI, as well as the numerous other local police departments, including Piscataway, East Brunswick, New Brunswick, Ocean Township, South Brunswick, Readington and the State Police, as well as the Monmouth, Somerset and Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office, all of whom comprised the task force charged with ending the gang's serial bank robbery spree.

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Defense counsel:

For Berrios – John Furlong, Esq., West Trenton

For Herrera-Genao – Martin Matlaga, Esq., New Brunswick

For Lynn – David Oakley, Esq., Princeton

For Cruz – Michael Pedicini, Esq., Morristown