

NEWS

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Leader of Notorious Drug Gang Sentenced to Life plus 85 Years in
Prison for Using Violence and Murder to Protect Drug Operations

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CAMDEN – A leader of a major heroin and crack cocaine distribution ring in Camden was sentenced to life plus 85 years in federal prison today for his conviction on drug and weapons charges, in which the jury found that the defendant, along with his co-defendants, conspired to protect their drug operation through the use of violence that included the murders of Hiram Rosa, Kenneth Allen, and Troy James, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler also ordered Allen Resto, 27, of Camden, a/k/a “Tito Allen,” to pay a \$5,000 fine.

On June 6, 2005, after eight hours of deliberations, the jury convicted two leaders of the Perez Organization, Resto and Bernard Murray, 30, of Camden, a/k/a “B-Nice” and Jose Rodriguez, 25, of Camden, a heroin bagger and Lorenzo Hardwick, 40, of Camden, a/k/a “FuQuan,” a drug-set manager, of one count of conspiracy to distribute heroin and crack cocaine.

The jury also convicted Murray, Hardwick and Resto of one count of possessing, brandishing and use of firearms, namely an AK-47 rifle and three handguns, in relation to a drug trafficking crime in the February 2001 murder of Rutgers University student Hiram Rosa as that murder related to the drug conspiracy.

Murray and Resto also were convicted of two counts of possessing, brandishing and use of firearms in relation to a drug trafficking crime. The charges are in connection with the use of a 9 millimeter handgun in the March 2001 murder of Kenneth Allen; and using an AK-47 and a .22 caliber handgun in the October 2001 murder of Troy James, as the killings relate to the drug conspiracy.

Murray, Resto and Hardwick also were convicted of one count each of use of a firearm in the furtherance of a drug crime, that being discharging, possessing and using firearms in the furtherance of the overall conspiracy.

On June 2, 2006, Judge Kugler sentenced Murray to life plus 85 years in federal prison and ordered him to pay a \$25,000 fine. Hardwick was sentenced on April 28, 2006, to life plus 30 years in federal prison and a fine of \$5,000.

“Three of the leaders of this violent drug gang will never again step onto the streets of Camden,” said Christie. “These well-deserved prison sentences are among the longest ever obtained in the District of New Jersey and should stand as an example to others involved in Camden’s violent drug-gang culture. The law enforcement community is united in their efforts to catch you, prosecute you under federal law and send you to a high-security federal prison far away from Camden for a very, very long time.”

According to the Superseding Indictment and trial testimony, Enrique Perez, 40, of Camden, was a partner with Murray and Resto in running the drug distribution organization. Perez pleaded guilty before Judge Kugler on Jan. 9, 2004, to one count of conspiracy to distribute

heroin and crack cocaine and one count of possession of a firearm as a convicted felon. Perez was sentenced on June 6, 2006, to 25 years in prison and a fine of \$20,000.

During the trial, Perez, along with others, testified that from January 1998 through September 2002 he, Murray and Resto controlled the flow of heroin in the areas of 5th and Grant Streets and 9th and Cedar Streets. Perez testified that they used managers to operate the drug sets on a daily basis and that Hardwick managed the crack cocaine drug set located at 7th and Vine St. Perez also testified that he, Murray, Hardwick and Resto, were involved in the Rosa murder.

In total, 12 individuals were charged in connection with the Perez Organization's drug trafficking and violence. All defendants have either pleaded guilty to the charges against them or have been convicted by a jury following their trial.

Perez, Murray, and Hardwick are, according to the original criminal complaint, members of the Camden street gang known as the "Sons of Malcolm X" (SOMX). This violent gang's initiation rite required members to kill someone to gain membership. Many SOMX members were prosecuted in the 1990s. The drug gang prosecuted in this case was a resurgence of the SOMX.

In determining the actual sentence, Judge Kugler consulted the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI, under the direction of Acting Special Agent in Charge Brian W. Lynch, in Philadelphia; the Camden County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Acting Prosecutor Joshua M. Ottenberg; the Camden City Police Department, under the direction of Arturo Veneas, Camden Police Department Supersession Executive; DEA, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerard P. McAleer, in Newark; ATF, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Mark Potter in Philadelphia; the U.S. Marshal's Service, under the direction of U.S. Marshal James T. Plousis; the Camden County Sheriff's Department, under the direction of Sheriff William Fontanez, and Rutgers's University Police, under the direction of Chief Guy Still, with the cooperative investigation leading to today's convictions.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Kevin Smith and Jason Richardson of the U.S. Attorney's Office Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorney: Brian O'Malley, Esq. Haddon Heights