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Utica Drug Gang Member Sentenced To 15 Years In Prison

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NEWS RELEASE

Richard S. Hartunian, United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York, announces that **WHITNEY FOWLER**, age 32, Utica, New York, was sentenced in Syracuse yesterday by Chief U.S. District Court Judge Norman A. Mordue to 15 years imprisonment for his role as a member of a Utica-based drug trafficking gang.

FOWLER previously pled guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than 500 grams of cocaine, and using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a drug trafficking crime. As part of his plea **FOWLER** admitted to being involved with a Utica-based drug organization known as Branch Off Productions ("BOP"). **FOWLER** was identified through wire intercepts and related surveillance as a Utica one of the primary drug dealers in this organization who routinely sold large quantities of cocaine to others in the Utica area.

The prosecution of BOP resulted from an investigation undertaken by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the New York State Police Special Investigations Unit, and the Oneida County Drug Task Force, which is comprised of agents from the Utica Police Department, the Oneida County Sheriff's Department, the Rome Police Department, and the New Hartford Police Department.

To date, the following items have been recovered during this investigation: approximately \$23,000 in U.S. currency; more than half a kilogram of cocaine; approximately 125 grams of crack cocaine; four handguns; and three long-barreled firearms. Agents have also seized the following nine vehicles, all of which are alleged to have been used to facilitate the organization's drug trafficking activities: (1) 2004 Acura TL; (2) 2005 Mitsubishi Endeavor; (3) 2003 Honda Accord; (4) 2004 Honda Accord; (5) 2002 Chevy Trail Blazer; (6) 2005 Jeep Cherokee; (7) 2002 Ford Explorer; (8) 2004 Mercedes-Benz; and (9) 2005 Acura TL.

Further inquiries can be directed to Assistant U. S. Attorney John M. Katko, Syracuse, New York at (315) 448-0916.