



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Richard Hartunian
Northern District of New York

July 26, 2011

[Syracuse, New York]

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/nyn>

SECOND GUILTY PLEA IN BRICKTOWN GANG RICO CONSPIRACY

RICHARD S. HARTUNIAN, United States Attorney, Northern District of New York, announces that **MATTHEW CHEEK, age 28**, of Syracuse, pled guilty today in U.S. District Court in Syracuse to an indictment which charged him and 12 others with conspiring to exploit their membership in the Bricktown Gang to engage in a pattern of racketeering activity which included multiple acts of murder, drug trafficking, and robbery. One other defendant has already pled guilty and the charges against 11 others remain pending.¹

The Indictment alleges that the gang has operated within the City of Syracuse from at least 2000 through the present. The indictment further alleges that members of the Bricktown Gang: (1) maintain a specific geographic territory within the City of Syracuse in which only gang members can sell crack cocaine, cocaine and marijuana; (2) protect that exclusive crack distribution territory with violence if necessary; (3) obtain drugs from suppliers in New York City and elsewhere; (4) project a very violent attitude and respond to violence with violence in order to preserve their stature in the gang community; (5) on occasion use hand signs, wear blue colored bandanas and have tattoos, all of which are intended to signify their gang membership; (6) use criteria such as willingness to use violence, ability to sell drugs, and familial connections to determine membership; and (7) routinely carry and use firearms in connection with their gang activity.

There are multiple acts of violence and drug distribution set forth in the Indictment, including 2 instances of knife violence, 2 murders, 8 other shootings, 7 other acts of gun possession, and 12 acts of crack distribution and/or possession with intent to distribute crack. With respect to the murders, the Indictment includes allegations that gang members killed innocent victims on two separate occasions as gang members sought retaliation against rival gang members. One such allegation involves the November, 2010 murder by gang member SAQUAN EVANS of a 20 month old infant named Rashad Walker, Jr., as he sat in a car seat with his mother by his side in the 300 block of Coolidge Avenue. The other racketeering act allegation involving murder involves the September 2007 shooting by gang members JARRELL WILLIAMS and ERNEST HESTER of Anthony Ford, who was killed in the 1600 block of East

¹ The allegations contained in the Indictment are mere accusations; and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty in a court of law.

Fayette Street. A female who was with him was shot in the head but survived.

At sentencing, **CHEEK** faces up to life imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and up to three years of supervised release following any period of incarceration. His sentencing hearing is set for December 5, 2011.

This prosecution resulted from a long-term investigation conducted by the Syracuse Gang Violence Task Force, which is comprised of agents and detectives from the following agencies: United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (Syracuse Office), the Syracuse Police Department, the Onondaga County Sheriff's Department, the New York State Troopers, and the United States Marshals Service. The Onondaga County District Attorney's Office also assisted in the investigation.

Further questions or inquiries may be directed to Assistant U.S. Attorney, John M. Katko, who is handling the case, at (315) 448-0672.

END OF NEWS RELEASE
