



*United States Attorney  
Southern District of New York*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**BRONX HITMAN SENTENCED TO FOUR CONSECUTIVE LIFE TERMS**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that CYRIL SMITH, a/k/a "Nicholas Smith," a/k/a "Nicholas Wright," a/k/a "Mark Nicholas Smith," a/k/a "Zero," was sentenced on Friday afternoon in Manhattan federal court to four consecutive terms of life imprisonment for distributing narcotics and committing three separate contract murders in the Bronx between 1998 and 2000.

SMITH, 31, was convicted on May 30, 2007, following a two-week trial before United States District Judge DENISE L. COTE. Specifically, the jury found SMITH guilty of the murder of JAMAL KITT, on July 5, 1998; the murder of TERRENCE CELESTINE, on July 30, 1998; and the murder of SANFORD Malone, on February 14, 2000. SMITH was also convicted of three counts related to his distribution of "crack" cocaine and other drugs between 1998 and 2005. According to the evidence at trial:

SMITH was a crack dealer who sold crack at street-level drug spots in the Bronx, including at 188<sup>th</sup> Street and Webster Avenue, and in the area of the Monterey Houses, a public housing project located at Monterey Avenue and 180<sup>th</sup> Street. SMITH also transported crack from the Bronx to Virginia for sale.

In early July 1998, a major Bronx drug dealer named EDGARDO COLON recruited SMITH to murder a rival drug dealer, JAMAL KITT, who was selling crack at a drug spot operated by COLON in the vicinity of Chisholm Street and Freeman Avenue, in the Bronx. SMITH shot and killed KITT with a 9-mm firearm. Roughly three weeks later, EDGARDO COLON recruited SMITH to murder another rival drug dealer, TERRENCE CELESTINE, who was selling crack in and around the Monterey Houses, where COLON's drug business was based. SMITH disguised himself with a black hooded jacket and black mask, snuck up behind CELESTINE in a rear courtyard of the Monterey Houses, and then shot CELESTINE at

least 13 times, including three times in the head, with the same 9-mm firearm that he had previously used to murder JAMAL KITT. The evidence showed that SMITH also shot a bystander through the thigh. Following CELESTINE's murder, COLON paid SMITH with narcotics that SMITH then sold in Virginia.

The third murder for which SMITH was found guilty, that of SANFORD Malone, occurred on Valentine's day 2000, during a wake at a funeral home on Bathgate Avenue, near Tremont Avenue, in the Bronx. At the time, Malone was the head of a large-scale crack distribution organization located on Hughes Avenue. According to the proof at trial, Malone's chief rival for the street-level crack trade in the Tremont Section of the Bronx was a dealer named EDWIN AVILEZ, a/k/a "DJ Ed," who operated on Monterey Avenue, between 178<sup>th</sup> and 179<sup>th</sup> Streets. At the Valentine's Day wake on Bathgate Avenue, AVILEZ and his associates recruited SMITH to murder Malone. SMITH shot and killed Malone in front of the funeral home on Bathgate Avenue, during the wake and in front of many witnesses. SMITH fired at least 14 shots with a 9-mm pistol, killing Malone, shooting one of Malone's associates through the neck, and shooting a bystander in the leg.

In imposing sentence, Judge COTE described the evidence of SMITH's guilt at trial as "overwhelming." Judge COTE sentenced SMITH to four consecutive terms of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole.

"With this sentence, Cyril Smith is finally brought to justice for three long-unsolved murders and will spend the rest of his life in prison, no longer able to terrorize the streets of his community," said United States Attorney MICHAEL J. GARCIA.

Mr. GARCIA praised the outstanding efforts of the New York City Police Department's Cold Case Squad in this case.

Assistant United States Attorneys DAVID M. RODY and DAVID V. HARBACH, II, are in charge of the prosecution.

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