



***United States Attorney
Southern District of New York***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FEBRUARY 15, 2006**

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**HITMAN FOR BRONX CRACK GANG CONVICTED AT TRIAL
OF CONTRACT MURDER**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ANTOINE STEWART, a/k/a "Damoo," was convicted February 10, 2006, in a jury trial before United States District Judge LORETTA A. PRESKA in connection with the murder of William Ragland, a/k/a "Illy-Rock," who was shot to death on July 11, 2002, in the John Adams Houses, a public housing project in the Bronx, New York. STEWART faces a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment.

STEWART was convicted of charges of murder in aid of racketeering, murder in aid of narcotics trafficking, and narcotics conspiracy, as well as various firearm charges. According to the proof at trial, STEWART was hired to murder Ragland, the leader of a crack gang based in the John Adams Houses, by members of a rival crack gang ("the Westchester Avenue Crew") based across Westchester Avenue in the adjacent St. Mary's Houses. Ragland was then shot four times at close range and the lone gunman escaped on foot. At the time of the murder, there were no arrests or suspects.

The proof at trial showed that a member of the Westchester Avenue Crew introduced STEWART to the Crew's leaders, Gamaliel Gonazalez and Kenneth Garner, who then hired him for the contract murder. STEWART, who was himself dealing crack in 2002 at the Murphy Consolidation, another housing project near Crotona Park in the Bronx, was initially promised a down payment of \$500 for the murder, and was given a revolver to carry out the shooting. According to witness testimony, STEWART met with members of the Westchester Avenue Crew shortly after Ragland was killed to receive an initial payment; Stewart was later further

compensated with heroin.

All of the thirteen charged members of the Westchester Avenue Crew have pleaded guilty to charges that include racketeering, narcotics trafficking, and firearms offenses. Garner has also pleaded guilty to the murder of Ragland, as has Derrick Johnson, another gang member who helped to deliver the murder weapon to the shooter. Gamaliel Gonzalez was shot to death on October 2, 2002, and several members of the Westchester Avenue Crew have since been convicted of his murder.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative efforts of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), specifically Group T-32, known as "REDRUM." Mr. GARCIA stated: "The conviction of Antoine Stewart for the murder of William Ragland demonstrates that federal investigators will use every available resource to end the violence and drug trade that plagues our public housing. This was a shooting carried out by a professional killer who left behind no physical evidence or witnesses linking him to the crime. Through the determined efforts of the DEA, Stewart and his co-conspirators have now been brought to justice for this cold-blooded murder."

Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration JOHN P. GILBRIDE stated, "DEA is dedicated to keeping violent drug traffickers off of the streets of New York City. The Drug Enforcement Task Force REDRUM investigative unit, made up of DEA Special Agents, New York Police Department Detectives and New York State Troopers, along with the United States Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York invested numerous hours and their safety in order to successfully investigate, prosecute and convict Antoine Stewart. The success of this conviction shows that the DEA will go to all lengths to try to stop the violence surrounded by drug trafficking."

Assistant United States Attorneys HARRY A. CHERNOFF and DAVID L. JAFFE are in charge of the prosecution.

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