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**MEMBER OF VIOLENT ROBBERY CREW SENTENCED TO
87 YEARS' IMPRISONMENT**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that VICTOR LORENZANO, a/k/a "Vic," a/k/a "Raul Belliard," a member of a violent robbery crew, was sentenced earlier today by United States District Judge JOHN F. KEENAN to 87 years' imprisonment in Manhattan federal court. This sentencing stems from a prosecution that resulted in the arrest and conviction of twelve members of a vicious armed robbery crew that, in most instances, targeted drug dealers.

In addition to the imprisonment, Judge KEENAN ordered LORENZANO to forfeit \$4,764,400, representing the amount of proceeds obtained as a result of the offense, and a 2001 Chrysler Town and Country vehicle. The Court also sentenced Lorenzano to a total of five years' supervised release and ordered Lorenzano to pay a \$900 mandatory special assessment.

On June 29, 2005, LORENZANO was convicted by a jury of armed robbery, firearms, possession with intent to distribute cocaine and heroin, and money laundering charges.

As established by the proof at trial, LORENZANO was a long-time member of a robbery crew that, during the period between 1995 and 2001, committed dozens of armed robberies in the Bronx, Manhattan and elsewhere, and stole massive amounts of cocaine and heroin worth millions of dollars. The proof at trial showed that the crew consisted of individuals from various ethnic backgrounds, including Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Albanians, and that they used violence, intimidation, and torture. The robbery crew received information from "santeros," or tipsters, who were typically large-scale drug dealers with inside information about individuals who were holding large amounts of money or drugs. After receiving information from santeros, the crew prepared for

robberies by conducting surveillance, following victims, and gathering intelligence. The proof at trial established that the crew used various equipment during robberies, including scanners, two-way radios, handcuffs, tracking devices, rappelling equipment, crow bars, chisels, and screwdrivers. Crew members wore gloves so they would not leave fingerprints and also wiped down all equipment, including batteries, before going on jobs so that they would not leave any fingerprints if they had to discard equipment. The crew carried firearms during robberies and burglaries.

The proof at trial showed that the crew broke into residences by pushing people into apartments as they were entering, breaking in through windows or doors, rappelling from rooftops, and posing as police officers. Once inside, crew members "locked down" victims by binding them with cable ties, handcuffs, phone cords or duct tape. They then started interrogating victims for information and searching for drugs and money. Victims were threatened, beaten, burned, pistol-whipped and tortured.

The proof further established that, during robberies, the crew stole whatever drugs or money they could find, and then fled in order to divide the proceeds. The drugs and money were doled out evenly, with the santero receiving an equal share. The stolen drugs were sold through santeros or other drug dealers who were capable of selling kilogram-quantities of cocaine or heroin quickly and at good prices. The crew sold cocaine for between \$17,000 and \$27,000 per kilogram, and heroin for between \$60,000 and \$72,000 per kilogram. Between 1995 and late 2001, the crew stole between 150 and 200 kilograms of cocaine and between 10 and 15 kilograms of heroin, as well as small amounts of Ecstasy and marijuana, jewelry, massive amounts of cash, firearms, and ammunition. In total, the crew stole property valued at approximately \$4 million to \$5 million.

The evidence at trial also showed that the crew used the robbery proceeds to live lavishly by buying cars, motorcycles, and jewelry, going to night clubs and restaurants, gambling, and taking expensive vacations. Crew members put down huge cash payments for cars and bought jewelry for as much as \$22,000 per item. LORENZANO bought a new 2001 Town & Country and an expensive BMW, both of which he placed under other names. He also bought expensive jewelry, including a Rolex watch, thick gold chains and bracelets, rings, and diamond-studded medallions.

The evidence at trial established that LORENZANO was a core and active member of the robbery crew and one of the more dangerous and volatile. During robberies, for example, LORENZANO brandished loaded firearms, "locked down" victims, searched

apartments, and pistol-whipped victims. On one occasion, when a victim was not willing to disclose the whereabouts of a drug stash, Lorenzano stabbed the victim in the leg with a 13-inch kitchen knife, causing the victim to bleed so profusely that an accomplice had to fashion a tourniquet to try to stem the bleeding.

Co-defendant JOSEPH VUKSANAJ pleaded guilty and, on April 27, 2006, was sentenced to 205 months' incarceration. Co-defendant AGRON GJIDIJA pleaded guilty and, on October 13, 2004, was sentenced to 204 months' incarceration. Co-defendant NAIM GJIDIJA pleaded guilty and, on November 23, 2004, was sentenced to 132 months' incarceration. Co-defendant VICTOR PEREZ pleaded guilty and, on July 12, 2006, was sentenced to 121 months' incarceration. Co-defendant RAPHAEL CLEMENTE pleaded guilty and, on March 14, 2005, was sentenced to 84 months' incarceration. Six other sentencings in this matter -- all which resulted from guilty pleas -- are still pending.

Mr. GARCIA praised the outstanding investigative efforts of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Internal Revenue Service in this investigation.

Assistant United States Attorneys JOSHUA A. GOLDBERG and ELIZABETH F. MARINGER are in charge of the prosecution.

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