



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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**MANHATTAN U.S. ATTORNEY ANNOUNCES GUILTY PLEA OF SENIOR  
GAMBINO ASSOCIATE ON MURDER AND ASSAULT CHARGES**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that JOSEPH WATTS, a longtime associate of the Gambino Organized Crime Family of La Cosa Nostra (the "Gambino Family"), pled guilty this morning before U.S. District Judge COLLEEN MCMAHON to a two-count Superseding Information that charges WATTS with participating in murder and assault conspiracies in order to maintain and increase his influence in the Gambino Family.

According to the Information, the plea proceeding, and the record of the case:

WATTS was a close associate of one-time Gambino Family Boss JOHN A. GOTTI and others. Although WATTS was never formally inducted into the Gambino Family as a "made" member because of his non-Italian lineage, he was afforded the status of a Gambino Family Capo.

In 1989, FREDERICK WEISS was a defendant in a case that was pending in the Southern District of New York. JOHN J. GOTTI, then Boss of the Gambino Family, suspected that WEISS was cooperating with the Government because he terminated a lawyer who regularly represented Gambino Family members and associates. GOTTI ordered WEISS to be murdered – an order that GOTTI communicated to WATTS and others. WATTS then put together a murder team to carry out the hit.

In September 1989, WATTS and others went to a house on Staten Island where they expected WEISS would be. WATTS assigned different Gambino members and associates to different tasks, including digging the grave where WEISS would be buried. WATTS himself stood in the garage, holding a gun and waiting to shoot WEISS upon his arrival. Because WEISS did not show up to the house as WATTS had expected, he was not killed that day.

However, a different team of shooters to whom GOTTI had also assigned the task of killing WEISS successfully located him the next day. He was shot to death in front of his apartment building.

While WATTS was serving a prison sentence in connection with his 2001 conviction for money laundering, he met Victim-1, whom he came to admire because of Victim-1's purported stock-picking abilities. When Victim-1 was released from prison, WATTS sent an emissary to deliver approximately \$350,000 to \$400,000 - all cash - to Victim-1 to invest on WATTS's behalf. The investment failed. In 2002, WATTS demanded his money back from Victim-1, who returned some, but not all, of WATTS's money.

To force Victim-1 to give him back all the money, WATTS began threatening Victim-1. On one occasion, WATTS and another individual confronted Victim-1 in Manhattan and physically assaulted him. On a subsequent occasion, WATTS threatened Victim-1 and physically shoved Victim-1 against a wall.

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WATTS, 69, of Staten Island, New York, faces a maximum sentence of 13 years in prison. He is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge MCMAHON on April 20, 2011, at 10:00 a.m.

Mr. BHARARA praised the investigative work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The case is being handled by the Office's Organized Crime Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys ARLO DEVLIN-BROWN and CHI T. STEVE KWOK are in charge of the prosecution.

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