



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

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JULY 8, 2011**

**CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
ELLEN DAVIS, JERIKA RICHARDSON,
CARLY SULLIVAN
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(212) 637-2600**

**LEADER OF ARMENIAN ORGANIZED CRIME RING PLEADS GUILTY
IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT TO RACKETEERING**

First "Vor" Convicted Of Racketeering Offense In U.S.

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ARMEN KAZARIAN, pled guilty today in Manhattan federal court to racketeering in connection with his involvement with the Mirzoyan-Terdjanian Organization, an Armenian-American organized crime enterprise, engaged in a wide range of criminal activity. KAZARIAN pled guilty before U.S. District Judge PAUL A. GARDEPHE.

Manhattan U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA said:
"International organized crime has emerged as one of the most serious law enforcement problems of the 21st century. It is a problem that this Office - and the Department of Justice as a whole - is committed to rooting out. Today, crime boss Armen Kazarian becomes the first known "Vor" to have been convicted of racketeering, but he will not be the last. His guilty plea should send a strong message to international gangsters all over the world that if you commit crimes in this country, we will find you, and we will prosecute you with the full force of the law."

According to the Indictment, other documents filed in this case, and statements made during today's guilty plea proceeding:

ARMEN KAZARIAN was a "Vor," a term translated as "Thief-in-Law." The term, refers to a member of a select group of high-level criminals from Russia and the countries that had been part of the former Soviet Union, including Armenia. "Vors" offer prestige and protection to criminal organizations in return for a share of criminal earnings, and use their position of authority to resolve disputes among criminals. KAZARIAN admitted "Vor" when he was arrested on racketeering charges in October 2010. The Indictment charged him with using his leadership position in the criminal community to assist Mirzoyan-Terdjanian Organization, an Armenian-American organized crime ring that engaged in an extensive range of criminal offenses

including the operation of a \$100 million dollar Medicare fraud billing ring.

* * *

KAZARIAN, 47, pled guilty to racketeering conspiracy, which carries a maximum penalty of twenty years in prison. In connection with his plea, KAZARIAN admitted his association with the Mirzoyan-Terdjanian Organization and further acknowledged engaging in extortion on the Organization's and his own behalf.

KAZARIAN, is scheduled to be sentenced by Judge GARDEPHE on October 6, 2011, at 3:00 p.m.

U.S. Attorney PREET BHARARA thanked the New York Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the New York City Police Department, the New York Office of Homeland Security Investigations, and the New York Office of the Inspector General, Department of Health and Human Services for their work in the investigation.

The prosecution is being handled by the Organized Crime Unit. Assistant U.S. Attorneys JENNIFER BURNS and ARLO DEVLIN-BROWN are in charge of the prosecution.

11-199

###