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**GENOVESE FAMILY ASSOCIATE PLEADS GUILTY TO ROBBERY,
EXTORTION, AND FIREARMS CHARGES**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that JOHN MELICHAREK, a/k/a "Rocky," an alleged associate of the Genovese Organized Crime Family of La Cosa Nostra, pleaded guilty today to robbery, extortion, and firearms charges. MELICHAREK's guilty plea was entered before United States Magistrate Judge ANDREW J. PECK in Manhattan federal court. According to the Indictment to which MELICHAREK pleaded guilty, other documents filed in the case, and statements made during MELICHAREK's guilty plea proceeding:

From at least 2003 to 2005, MELICHAREK was an associate in the crew of Genovese Family captain, or "capo," ANGELO PRISCO. In September 2003, MELICHAREK and several other Genovese Family members and associates robbed a business owner inside his home in Morris County, New Jersey. MELICHAREK helped plan the robbery, including by recruiting several others. In the early morning hours of September 28, 2003, the team MELICHAREK had assembled broke into the victim's home; tied up the victim, his wife, and his housekeeper; assaulted and pistol-whipped the victim; and stole several hundred thousand dollars worth of cash, collectible coins, jewelry, and guns. After the robbery, MELICHAREK kept a portion of the proceeds and paid another portion as "tribute" to PRISCO.

In October 2003, MELICHAREK orchestrated another home invasion, in Orange County, New York, targeting the cash proceeds of the business owned by one of the home's occupants. MELICHAREK helped plan the robbery, recruited a break-in team, and procured guns for use during the robbery. MELICHAREK then drove the team to the victim's home. The defendants entered the home, tied up and assaulted a victim, and searched for cash and other valuables.

Additionally, from 2004 until early 2005, MELICHAREK participated in the extortion of \$50,000 from a small business

owner based in Manhattan. MELICHAREK and others collected the money from the victim due to their organized crime status, and by making threats of violence against the victim and his family.

MELICHAREK faces a maximum sentence of life in prison. Sentencing is scheduled for September 4, 2008 at 4:00 p.m. before Judge SHIRA A. SCHEINDLIN.

MELICHAREK's guilty plea is the fifth in this case to date, including: DOMINICK MEMOLI, a/k/a "Shakes," and DARDIAN CELAJ, a/k/a "Danny," to robbery and firearms offenses; LOUIS PIPOLO to a robbery charge; and MICHAEL IUNI to an extortion charge. All these defendants await sentencing. The remaining defendants, ENED GJELAJ, a/k/a "Neddy," and ANGELO NICOSIA, are scheduled for trial before United States District Judge SHIRA A. SCHEINDLIN in July 2008. As to them, the charges are merely accusations, and the defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Mr. GARCIA praised the work of the Newark Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), and the assistance of the FBI New York Field Office; the Orange County, New York District Attorney's Office; the Westchester County, New York District Attorney's Office; the New York State Police; the Morris County, New Jersey Prosecutor's Office; the Rockaway Township, New Jersey Police Department; and the New Jersey State Commission of Investigation.

Assistant United States Attorneys ELIE HONIG and LISA ZORNBERG are in charge of the prosecution.

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