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**LEADER OF DIAMOND HIJACKING AND ROBBERY CREW SENTENCED
IN MANHATTAN FEDERAL COURT TO 32 YEARS IN PRISON**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that HECTOR RIVERA was sentenced today to 32 years in prison for leading a robbery and extortion crew that targeted diamond businesses and shipments from the Diamond District in midtown Manhattan. United States District Judge HAROLD BAER, JR., also ordered RIVERA to forfeit \$2.93 million in criminal proceeds.

According to documents filed in this case and the evidence at trial:

RIVERA was the leader of a robbery and extortion crew that operated primarily in the Diamond District in midtown Manhattan from at least 2003 through December 2009. Among the specific crimes proven at trial was the November 29, 2005, robbery of a diamond business located at 580 5th Avenue in Manhattan. Two armed men operating at RIVERA's direction entered the business dressed as Federal Express delivery workers and carrying a gun supplied by RIVERA. They threatened and tied up the employees of the business and stole millions of dollars in diamonds and other merchandise from the business, which was then delivered to RIVERA and other co-conspirators.

In addition, in another crime planned and directed by RIVERA, on the night of December 20, 2007, in the vicinity of 48th Street and 11th Avenue in Manhattan, two men displaying firearms and police badges approached the driver of a FedEx tractor-trailer believed to contain several million dollars worth of diamonds. The driver was removed from the FedEx truck at gunpoint, handcuffed, and kidnapped. The FedEx truck was driven to a loading dock in Brooklyn. When the defendants were unable to unload the contents of the truck, it was driven to a different location where it was abandoned. The driver, after being held for more than four hours, was then released.

After the 2007 hijacking, through the use of surveillance, consensually-recorded telephone conversations and

in-person meetings between RIVERA and a cooperating witness (the "CW"), as well as court-authorized wiretaps on two cellular telephones, law enforcement officials learned that a second hijacking was scheduled to take place on December 4, 2008, and that it was being planned by RIVERA and others. During the lead-up to December 4, 2008, Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI") agents observed, among other things, RIVERA and another defendant driving past a warehouse on Long Island, which the CW had previously shown to RIVERA as a possible place to off-load the contents of the hijacked FedEx tractor-trailer. Intercepted wire and electronic communications between RIVERA and others revealed, among other things, that RIVERA was involved in recruiting people to participate in the robbery. RIVERA and more than a dozen co-conspirators were arrested prior to carrying out the planned hijacking on December 4, 2008.

Following a jury trial before Judge BAER in December 2009, RIVERA was found guilty of one count of conspiracy to commit Hobbs Act robbery and three counts of Hobbs Act robbery or attempted robbery, each of which carries a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison. He was also found guilty of two counts of using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence.

Mr. BHARARA praised the work of the FBI and the New York City Police Department in the investigation of this case.

This case is being handled by the Office's Violent Crimes Unit. Assistant United States Attorneys MICHAEL Q. ENGLISH and MARGARET GARNETT are in charge of the prosecution.

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