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**LEADER OF MULTIMILLION-DOLLAR MARIJUANA RING
SENTENCED TO 21 YEARS IN PRISON**

MICHAEL J. GARCIA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that MARC MUNSON was sentenced today to 252 months in prison for drug trafficking. In June 2008, MUNSON, 46, and a key associate, PAUL KARKENNY, 47, were found guilty, following a three week jury trial in Manhattan federal court, on charges of conspiring to distribute more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana. According to documents filed in this case and the proof at trial before United States District Judge JOHN G. KOELTL:

From 1997 through February 2004, MARC MUNSON and PAUL KARKENNY participated in a conspiracy to distribute approximately 50,000 pounds of marijuana. MUNSON ran the New York end of the operation ("the MUNSON Organization" or "the New York Operation"), which ordered loads of marijuana that had been smuggled into the United States from Mexico. MUNSON and KARKENNY would then work with co-conspirators based in Tucson, Arizona and Las Vegas, Nevada to have the marijuana transported to the New York City metropolitan area, the Detroit, Michigan metropolitan area, and elsewhere.

The loads of marijuana secretly transported across the country ranged in size from approximately 200 pounds to approximately 4,500 pounds per shipment. The MUNSON Organization transported the smaller shipments in SUVs, and for larger shipments would arrange for heavy-duty pickup trucks towing enclosed trailers, such as race-car trailers decorated with "Speed Racer Autosport" logos, to help disguise the true nature of the trips. In the latter stages of the conspiracy, the MUNSON Organization occasionally transported the marijuana in commercial moving trucks.

During these trips, the MUNSON Organization often used decoy cars to attract police attention so that the vehicles carrying the loads of marijuana could travel undisturbed and undetected. In addition, the MUNSON Organization would often use

pairs of transporters to make it appear that the occupants of a vehicle were a couple moving across the country.

MUNSON -- who lived in Brooklyn, New York, East Hanover, New Jersey, and Holmdel, New Jersey during the course of the conspiracy -- was the principal contact in the New York area for the Mexican suppliers and the other co-conspirators based in Arizona who handled the transporting arrangements. MUNSON also used Mexican suppliers who operated stash houses in Las Vegas, Nevada as a second marijuana supply source to the New York Operation.

In his capacity as the head of the New York Operation, MUNSON, among other things: (1) coordinated the size of marijuana shipments to the New York City metropolitan area and elsewhere; (2) instructed the transporters of the marijuana shipments where to deliver the loads; (3) set the price of marijuana per pound that the wholesale customers would have to pay to the MUNSON Organization; (4) determined which wholesale customers would receive what portions of a load for distribution; (5) gave money to transporters to bring back to co-conspirators in Arizona and Nevada to pay for the marijuana; and (6) paid transporters for their services in delivering the marijuana.

MUNSON paid KARKENNY to operate stash houses and to break down the large loads of drugs into smaller loads that KARKENNY would then deliver to wholesale customers in New York City on MUNSON's behalf. During the course of the conspiracy, KARKENNY received more than 25,000 pounds of marijuana at his homes.

MUNSON used his profits to invest in expensive homes, real estate ventures, and restaurants in New Jersey.

In addition to the prison term, Judge KOELTL sentenced MUNSON to five years of supervised release and ordered him to pay \$46.2 million in forfeiture to the United States. KARKENNY awaits sentencing.

Mr. GARCIA praised the investigative work of the New York Office of the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), and thanked the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan and the DEA Detroit Field Division for their cooperation and assistance in this investigation.

Assistant United States Attorneys JASON P.W. HALPERIN and KENNETH A. POLITE are in charge of the prosecution.