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LEADER OF PEEKSKILL DRUG ORGANIZATION SENTENCED
IN WHITE PLAINS FEDERAL COURT TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT FOR MURDERS

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that KHALID BARNES, a/k/a "Big Homie," a/k/a "Lid," was sentenced to life in prison today by United States District Judge STEPHEN C. ROBINSON in White Plains federal court for the murders of two drug dealers in Manhattan. On May 13, 2008, a jury convicted BARNES, 33, of the February 13, 2004, murders of drug dealers Demond Vaughan and Sergio Santana after a six-week trial. On May 30, 2008, after considering two other options -- a sentence of death or allowing the court to decide the sentence -- the same jury returned a unanimous verdict imposing a sentence of life imprisonment without the possibility of release against BARNES.

The murders were charged under a federal statute governing deaths caused in the course of using or carrying a firearm in relation to a drug trafficking crime or a crime of violence. The jury also convicted BARNES of racketeering, racketeering conspiracy, multiple counts of narcotics trafficking, conspiracy to kidnap, kidnapping, possession of a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence, possession of a silencer in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and possession of ammunition by a convicted felon. Among the other sentences imposed, Judge ROBINSON imposed concurrent sentences of 30 years on the racketeering charges, the narcotics conspiracy charges, and the kidnapping charge.

According to the evidence at trial:

BARNES was a leader of a racketeering enterprise centered in Peekskill, New York (the "Barnes Brothers Organization"), that, from 1995 through 2004 was involved in the distribution of large quantities of crack cocaine, powder cocaine, and marijuana, as well as acts of violence including two murders and a kidnapping. At its peak in the fall of 2003, the Barnes Brothers Organization was

distributing well over 100 grams of crack on a daily basis. This represented between \$8,000 and \$10,000 a day in revenue to the organization. In November 2003, BARNES and three others tried unsuccessfully to steal drugs from their then supplier by kidnapping one of the supplier's workers after a meeting in Yonkers, near the Bronx border. The kidnapping victim escaped by diving out of a moving car on Broadway in the Bronx.

Shortly thereafter, BARNES started working with new cocaine suppliers, Demond Vaughan and Sergio Santana. BARNES bought multiple kilograms of cocaine from them over a several-month period, and, in February 2004, BARNES devised a plan to set up a drug deal with Vaughan and Santana, but then to kill them in order to steal cocaine and money from them. Several days before the murders, BARNES arranged the drug deal and made inquiries about a firearm. On February 13, 2004, BARNES purchased a .22-caliber pistol and custom-made silencer from a Peekskill acquaintance, drove by himself to Vaughan's apartment on 145th Street in Manhattan, entered the apartment, and shot Vaughan and Santana in the head multiple times while they counted money. Both Vaughan and Santana were found dead with some of the money still clutched in their hands.

In March 2004, when BARNES and several of his coconspirators were arrested, agents seized hundreds of grams of crack and powder cocaine from stash houses used by members of the Barnes Brothers Organization, as well as numerous firearms and ammunition. In addition to being convicted of the crimes listed above, Barnes was acquitted of three attempted murder counts, two counts of conspiracy to murder, and one count of possessing a firearm and ammunition while a convicted felon.

United States Attorney BHARARA said, "The Barnes Brothers Organization was a plague on Peekskill, spreading drugs and violence in its wake. Today's life sentence ensures that Khalid Barnes and his crew will never again pose a threat to the Peekskill community."

KHALID BARNES' conviction is the result of a lengthy wiretap investigation by and close coordination among the United States Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), the Peekskill Police Department, and the United States Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York. Including KHALID BARNES, 13 members of the Barnes Brothers Organization have been convicted to date. Ten have been sentenced and their prison terms range from 4 to 13 years. Regarding two additional members, DAWUD BARNES pleaded guilty and TUERE BARNES was convicted after a trial. Both are awaiting sentencing. One other defendant, ANTHONY PAULINO, is a fugitive. As to PAULINO, the charges in the Indictment are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Mr. BHARARA thanked the DEA and the Peekskill Police for their tireless efforts in dismantling the Barnes Brothers Organization.

Assistant United States Attorney ANDREW S. DEMBER is in charge of the prosecution.

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