

NEWS

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Blonds Gang Members Admit Murders, Drug Trafficking,
Armed Robberies and Other Crimes; Each Faces 30 to Life in Prison

(More)

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NEWARK – Amid jury selection for their impending racketeering trial, four members and one associate of a notorious set of the Bloods street gang in Essex County – including its leaders – pleaded guilty today, admitting among other things that each of them murdered at least one person, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

The Double ii set of the Bloods, an East Orange-based organization, were alleged to have committed or attempted to commit at least 19 murders, ran a high-level heroin distribution ring, committed aggravated assaults, armed robberies, arson and trafficked in firearms.

Three the defendants face prison sentences of between 30 years and life; two face 25 years to life. There is no parole in the federal system.

One of the defendants, Amir Winn, admitted that he shot the father of an 8-year-old boy because the father wanted Winn and the Bloods not to bother his son. The shooting occurred in front of the child in East Orange.

“These are cold-blooded killers and remorseless thugs,” Christie said. “They murdered to intimidate, to consolidate their hold on neighborhoods where they sell drugs, and to avenge disputes with rivals.”

“These pleas and the likelihood that these young men will spend decades in prison should be a wake up call to other gang members in Essex County,” said Christie. “Give up the gang life, the violence and drug dealing. It’s not worth it, and there is a large law enforcement contingent in place to watch you, arrest and prosecute you.”

During his plea hearing before U.S. District Judge Katharine S. Hayden, Tewhan Butler, 26, admitted that he was the leader – or in Bloods parlance, the “101” – of the Double ii set.

Under questioning from Assistant U.S. Attorney Serina Vash, Butler went beyond yes or no answers to describe his role. Asked if there was an organized chain of command in the gang set, he replied: “I was the chain of command.... There is no one above me.”

Butler then went on to describe the Oct. 19, 2000 murder of Robin Dwayne Thompson at a gasoline station in East Orange. Butler said he got out of his car with a gun, covered his face with an article of clothing, approached Thompson from behind and shot him in the back of the head two times, killing him. The government contends the murder was part of Butler’s effort to solidify his reputation in the neighborhood.

Butler, whose sentencing is scheduled for Jan. 3, pleaded guilty to racketeering, and specifically admitted three racketeering acts: murder for the killing of Thompson; conspiracy to commit murders of others, and conspiracy to distribute heroin.

Also pleading guilty today:

- Quadree Smith, 26, to racketeering and dealing firearms without a license, and the following racketeering acts: murder, conspiracy to commit murder and conspiracy to distribute heroin. Smith, during his guilty plea, said he too was a leader of the Double ii set and mimicked the remark from Butler. “I was the chain of command,” he said.

Smith said that on April 29, 2000, he shot and killed Bryant “Dirty O” Williams in a dispute over money. Smith also admitted that he purchased “dozens” of weapons, including semi-automatic assault rifles, from an Ohio gun dealer, using intermediaries to obtain and transport the weapons to East Orange.

- Amir Winn, 23, to racketeering and the following racketeering acts: murder, two attempted murders and conspiracy to distribute heroin. Winn admitted, among other things, that on July 25, 2002, he sought out another man, LaQuan Brooks, for “disrespecting” the Bloods because Brooks had said to other Double ii members that he was upset about the gang members bothering his 8-year-old son. Winn admitted that, after getting a gun, he found Brooks, called him into the street and shot him once in the chest amid a crowd of people, including Brooks’ son. Brooks died from his wounds.

- Samir Moses, 21, to racketeering and the following racketeering acts: murder and arson. Moses admitted that on April 17, 2004, he and other Double ii members were driving through an East Orange neighborhood and spotted a group of Crips gang members. Moses said that after one of them flashed a Crips hand signal, he got out of the car with a gun and shot the 16-year-old, Anthony Copeland, who died from a single gunshot wound to the chest.

- David Alston, 31, to racketeering and the following racketeering acts: murder, two attempted murders and heroin distribution. He admitted to shooting fellow Double ii member Al-Kabir Sorey on Jan 19, 2003. The government alleges it was over a drug dispute.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Serina Vash, Marion Percell and Christopher Kelly.

For their work in this investigation, related prosecutions and continuing law enforcement efforts against street gangs in Essex County, Christie credited and thanked the following officers and agencies: Special Agents of the FBI; Special Agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; assistant prosecutors and investigators from the Essex County Prosecutor’s Office; the East Orange Police Department; the Irvington Police Department; the Newark Police Department; the Orange Police Department; the

Essex County Sheriff's Department, and the Essex County Department of Corrections.
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