



PRESS NOTICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NOTORIOUS GANG - WEST MARION UP-TOP SOLDIERS - PLEAD GUILTY

COLUMBIA, South Carolina -- Acting United States Attorney Kevin McDonald announced today that nine Florence gang members, DEMETRIS LEON HAM, a/k/a "Crazy Lil Daddy," 31, WILLIE DONNELL BURRELL, a/k/a "Destroya," 33, LEVESTER TYYON WOODS, a/k/a "Main," 22, ANTWAN LORENZO WOODS, a/k/a "Twan," 20, JYQUAN ANTONIO WOODS, a/k/a "Cheese," 19, TYQUAN JAMAR JOHNSON, a/k/a "Lil Ty," 22, CARYONE CORRY MCDONALD, a/k/a "Corry," 27, CHARLES RAY THOMAS, II, a/k/a "Worm," 23, and DEMETRIUS LASHAWN CAPERS, a/k/a "Pee Wee," 23, all of Florence, South Carolina, pled guilty to federal drug conspiracy charges. All of the men are members or affiliates of the West Marion Up Top Soldiers street gang, which was responsible for numerous shootings and crimes in Florence since 2004. The leaders of the gang, HAM and BURRELL, face mandatory

minimum terms of imprisonment of 20 and 10 years, respectively, and a maximum possible penalty of life. The others face penalties of either 5 to 40 years or 10 years to life depending on their prior convictions and involvement in the case.

Evidence in the case included multiple drug buys and seizures of guns and drugs from gang members. Law enforcement also obtained DVDs, each containing rap-style videos of gang members from across the state. The Up Top Soldiers' music videos on the tapes glorify gang membership, violence, and drug dealing and depict many Florence elementary school children flashing the gang's characteristic "WM" symbol. State and federal law enforcement are continuing to work together in their investigation of Florence street gangs and expect more prosecutions in the near future.

United States District Judge Bryan Harwell accepted the guilty pleas and will sentence the men after presentence investigations are completed in the case. The case was investigated by the Florence Police Department, the Florence County Sheriff's Office, the 12th Circuit Solicitor's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the United States Marshal's Service and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Rose Mary Parham of the Florence Office.