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For Immediate Release
October 10, 2008

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VERNIER RECEIVES LIFE SENTENCE FOR CARJACKING

Vernier Killed Israeli Citizen During Theft of Vehicle

LAKE CHARLES, La.: JONATHAN VERNIER, 37, will spend the rest of his life in prison for the 2003 carjacking which resulted in the death of Ran Mesika, a 22 year old Israeli citizen who was visiting and traveling across the United States, U.S. Attorney Donald W. Washington announced today. The sentence was handed down in federal court in Lake Charles by U.S. District Judge Patricia Minaldi.

Last April, VERNIER was convicted by a jury of carjacking resulting in death, a crime that carries a maximum sentence of life in prison. Trial testimony showed that the victim, a young Israeli citizen who was traveling across the country while selling jewelry on consignment for a San Diego-based company, picked up VERNIER as he was hitchhiking through Texas. The victim's family in Israel spoke with their son by telephone on May 2, 2003, but never heard from him again. Shortly afterwards, VERNIER made 49 attempts to obtain cash using the victim's credit card at ATM machines throughout Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. Vernier was eventually arrested in Florida and was found to be in possession of the victim's van and inventory of jewelry. Vernier was convicted in the Southern District of Florida for Unauthorized Use of a Credit Card and Interstate Transportation of Stolen Property.

A forensic examination of the victim's van disclosed blood stains which matched the victim's DNA which led to Vernier's indictment in Louisiana for Carjacking Resulting in Death. An FBI agent testified at trial that VERNIER later admitted killing the victim in Louisiana. The victim was last seen alive at a Wal-Mart store in Lakes Charles. His body was recovered after the trial buried in a rice field in Jefferson Davis Parish, south of Jennings, La.

U.S. Attorney Washington stated: "Jonathan Vernier deserves to spend the rest of his life in prison for the killing of Ran Mesika. Still, we are mindful of the victim's family who have suffered a devastating loss that cannot be replaced. We are also thankful for the efforts of Mr. Mesika's father, the FBI and others, including the Jefferson Davis Parish Sheriff's Office, who rendered great assistance in bringing this matter to closure."

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Lake Charles Resident Agency. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Joe Mickel and Collin Sims.

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