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TWO FINAL DEFENDANTS PLEAD GUILTY IN "BROWNSIDE LOCOS" GANG CASE JUST BEFORE TRIAL

Atlanta, GA - ALEX ROMERO, a/k/a "Stranger," 29, and RUBEN HERNANDEZ, a/k/a "Boxer," 25, both of the Lawrenceville, Georgia, area pleaded guilty late Wednesday to charges of RICO (Racketeering Influenced Corrupt Organization) Conspiracy, which included their involvement in three gang-related murders. ROMERO and HERNANDEZ are the final 2 out of a dozen defendants arrested in the "Brownside Locos" federal gang case.

"The Brownside Locos have been dismantled," said United States Attorney David E. Nahmias. "The stock in trade of Brownside Locos was fear. The gang's purpose, and what they cared about, was to terrorize people who they thought were rival gang members. It didn't matter if the person who they scared, hurt, or killed turned out not to be a rival gang member, but an innocent person instead," said Nahmias. "Stopping gang-related intimidation and fear will continue to be a focus of federal law enforcement in North Georgia."

Twelve defendants were arrested in the Brownside Locos case when the case was indicted in November 2002. One defendant, JULIO RAMOS, a/k/a "Sleepy," is considered a fugitive and is believed to be in Mexico. Other defendants have pleaded guilty to related racketeering charges.

According to Nahmias and the evidence and information presented in court: HERNANDEZ, one of Brownside Locos' founding members (Brownside Locos began its activity in 1995-96) pleaded guilty to the May 1998 murder of Ricardo Meza during a drive-by shooting that occurred on Peachtree Industrial Boulevard's access road in Gwinnett County. ROMERO pleaded guilty to the July 2001 murder of Karlin Antunez in a drive-by shooting which occurred on Mitchell Road in Norcross, and to the October 2002 murder of Aldo Vallejo, that occurred during a gun battle between two cars as they were driving down the Sugarloaf Parkway access road in Gwinnett County.

In previous court proceedings, another gang member, ISRAEL TALAVERA, a/k/a "Puppet," pleaded guilty to his involvement in the 2002 Sugarloaf Parkway murder.

Another, OMAR FLORES, a/k/a “Looney,” also pleaded guilty to firing the initial shots in the November 2000 double homicide that took place at the “Parktown Apartments” in DeKalb County in which Apollo Dominguez and Maria Cabellos were killed. Yet another defendant, CARLOS MAYNARD-REYES, a/k/a “Smokey,” pleaded guilty to his involvement in the Antunez murder on Mitchell Road in Norcross.

According to documents filed in court, members of Brownside Locos imposed rules and disciplined members who broke these rules. Members used hand signs to identify other members and would obtain tattoos of insignia peculiar to Brownside Locos. They also would obtain, possess, and distribute firearms to other members of the enterprise for use in the commission of crimes that would benefit the gang, including assaults upon members of rival street gangs.

Sentencings for ROMERO and HERNANDEZ have been set for January 4, 2007, before United States District Judge Beverly Martin.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the FBI, with the assistance of the Safe Streets Task Force, which includes Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) the Atlanta Police Department, the Alpharetta Police Department and the Gwinnett Police Department, with the Norcross Police Department, the Chamblee Police Department, and the DeKalb County Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorneys Kim Dammers and William L. McKinnon, Jr. are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.