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**FIVE MEMBERS OF VIOLENT DRUG GROUP PLEAD GUILTY
TO DRUG CONSPIRACY AND FIREARMS CHARGES**

Baltimore, Maryland - Allen F. Loucks, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that late yesterday after a jury was selected Shawn Henry, age 28, London King, age 24, Tyrell Fields, age 34, Ryan Ayers, age 24, and Dante Faulker, age 25, all of Baltimore, Maryland, pled guilty to various crimes arising from their participation in a drug conspiracy and a series of related shootings and murders.

The 29 count indictment charged that from 1996 through June 2004 the defendants operated or worked for a drug distribution network that was responsible for selling large quantities of heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine in the 2000 block of E. North Avenue and the 1800 block of N. Chester and Castle Streets in East Baltimore. The indictment further alleged that the defendants, who were part of a drug trafficking group referred to as the North Avenue Boys, committed acts of violence against members of a rival neighborhood drug trafficking group known as the Project Boys, between November 2000 through May 28, 2001. That feud ultimately resulted in the murder of a North Avenue Boys gang member on November 11, 2001 and that of the girlfriend of another on Memorial Day 2001. The feud also resulted in the murder of a Project Boys drug worker on January 5, 2001 and that of two persons believed to be members of the Project Boys group on February 18, 2001.

The feud also involved several other non-fatal shootings that occurred between November 8, 2000 and May 2001 when members of the rival groups encountered each other.

Pursuant to the terms of their guilty pleas to count 10 of the indictment, in which they were charged with a non-fatal shooting of two rival drug group members on November 9, 2000, Ryan Ayres, London King and Tyrell Fields must each receive a sentence of 25 years imprisonment without parole.

Shawn Henry entered a guilty plea to Count One, in which he was charged with conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute cocaine, heroin and crack. The terms of his guilty plea require imposition of a sentence of 30 years imprisonment without parole.

Dante Faulkner, a/k/a Cooldon, entered a guilty plea to Count One, the drug conspiracy count, and Count Twenty, charging possession of a firearm in relation to that conspiracy on July 20, 2001. Pursuant to the terms of his plea agreement, Faulkner must receive a sentence of not less than 35 years imprisonment and up to 40 years imprisonment without parole. The sentencings for all five of these defendants have been scheduled for early April 2005.

In addition to yesterday's five guilty pleas by these North Avenue Boy members, to date, four other North Avenue Boys and 13 members of the Project Boys have been previously convicted on federal drug conspiracy or related firearm charges in separate federal prosecutions by the U.S. Attorney's Office. Several others defendants from these two groups have entered guilty pleas in state court in prosecutions coordinated by federal prosecutors.

The remaining defendants, Charles Laster, a/k/a Poppy age 24, and Corey Grant, a/k/a Gutter, age 26, both of Baltimore, remain at large.

The criminal charges in this indictment are the result of a joint investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Baltimore City Police Department, the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office and the United States Attorney's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys John F. Purcell and Jonathan M. Mastrangelo.