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MEMBERS OF BALTIMORE AREA DRUG CONSPIRACY SENTENCED

Baltimore, Maryland - Allen F. Loucks, United States Attorney for the District of Maryland, announced that today U.S. District Court Judge Catherine C. Blake sentenced Ralph K. Williams, Jr., age 30, of Baltimore, Maryland to 30 years in prison after a jury returned guilty verdicts on November 5, 2004 on all counts in a federal drug conspiracy case against Williams and co-defendants Bernard Christian, age 34, of Pikesville, Maryland and Kenneth Mitchell, age 30, of Edgewood, Maryland. Judge Blake previously sentenced Mitchell and Christian on February 4, 2005 to 235 months and 188 months in prison, respectively.

According to evidence presented at the two week trial, between June of 2001 and March of 2003, a large drug ring conspired to bring hundreds of kilograms of cocaine into Baltimore from Los Angeles. The defendants and their associates used overnight parcel carriers as a primary means of sending money to Los Angeles and shipping drugs to Baltimore. Christian was employed as a driver for Federal Express. His regular route was the Johns Hopkins Hospital Center. Christian routinely intercepted packages laden with cocaine which he delivered to others for distribution.

According to trial evidence, Mitchell and Williams traveled frequently to California to deliver

money but were generally responsible for the distribution of cocaine in Baltimore and the collection of proceeds from those sales. The jury found that the conspiracy involved at least 300 kilograms of cocaine which was distributed in Baltimore and found that the government was entitled to forfeit drug proceeds in the amount of \$6 million from the defendants. The jury also found Mitchell and Williams to be leaders and organizers within the conspiracy and that Christian had abused a position of trust when he used his job at Federal Express to facilitate, as well as conceal, the criminal conduct.

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force in Baltimore and Los Angeles; the Maryland State Police, the Anne Arundel County Police Department; the Burbank, California Police Department; the Baltimore County Police Department; and Baltimore City Police Department.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James G. Warwick and Special Assistant United States Attorney James T. Wallner.