

Department of Justice

December 2007

Volume 1, Issue 1

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Michael B. Mukasey Sworn In as 81st Attorney General



Chief Justice John G. Roberts, Jr. participates in the ceremonial swearing-in for new U.S. Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey as President George W. Bush and the family of the country's Attorney General look on. The event, held in the Great Hall of the Department of Justice, occurred on November 14, 2007.

Attorney General Mukasey Participates in the Opening of National Anti-Gang Facility

The Department of Justice is leading the effort to combat the threat to the public order posed by national, transnational and regional street gangs. The Department's strategy is to achieve maximum impact at the national level against the most violent gangs in this country. A newly opened facility in Northern Virginia will serve as a central location for interagency cooperation and collaboration, and house approximately 80 agents, analysts, support staff and prosecutors.

The facility housing the National Gang Intelligence Center (NGIC) and the National Gang Targeting, Enforcement and Coordination Center (GangTECC) will bring together intelligence analysts and law enforcement agents and prosecutors to attack the problems caused by gangs and gang-related violence at all ends. The facility is designed to facilitate gang-related information sharing between federal, state, local and tribal governments and law enforcement agencies.



Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey delivers remarks at the open house for the National Gang Intelligence Center and National Gang Targeting, Enforcement and Coordinating Center in Arlington, Virginia. The event was held November 28, 2007.

Happy Holidays!

Department of Justice

Newsletter from the Office of Intergovernmental and Public Liaison

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Hate Crimes and Prosecution of Civil Rights Violations

Since the creation of the Civil Rights Division 50 years ago, the Department of Justice has been, and remains, deeply committed to the vigorous enforcement of our nation's civil rights laws. In recent years, the Department has prosecuted a number of high-profile hate crime cases. As permitted by federal criminal law, the Department of Justice continues to aggressively prosecute those within our society who commit acts of hate against others based on race, color, national origin, or religious beliefs.

Ongoing Commitment To Prosecuting Civil Rights Violations:

*In the last several years, the Criminal Section of the Civil Rights Division has set records and achieved notable successes in prosecuting defendants for civil rights violations.

*In fiscal year 2007, the Department convicted 189 defendants of civil rights violations, the largest number ever in the history of the Department.

*The fiscal year 2007 number broke the previous year's record number of 181 defendants convicted.

*In fiscal year 2006, the Department charged 201 defendants with civil rights violations, the highest number ever recorded in the Criminal Section.

*From fiscal year 2001 to fiscal year 2007, the Department of Justice charged nearly 15 percent more defendants with civil rights violations than were charged from fiscal year 1994 through fiscal year 2000. (1159 vs. 1010)

*From fiscal year 2001 to fiscal year 2007, the Department of Justice charged 62 defendants in 41 cross-burning cases.

*In fiscal year 2007, the Department charged and convicted the second largest number of defendants for official misconduct, or color of law, violations in the history of the Department.

*From fiscal year 2001 to fiscal year 2007, the Department of Justice convicted over 50 percent more defendants with official misconduct, or color of law, violations than were convicted from fiscal year 1994 through fiscal year 2000. (391 vs. 256)

Keisler Delivers Farewell



DOJ employees were invited to attend the Farewell Ceremony for former Acting Attorney General Peter D. Keisler on December 19, 2007. Mr. Keisler, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Division, delayed his original departure date in order to serve as the Acting Attorney General during an important transitional period.

PUBLIC INTEGRITY NEWS

Former Alaska State Speaker of the House Peter Kott Sentenced on Public Corruption Charges

Peter Kott, former Speaker of the Alaska House of Representatives, was sentenced to 72 months in prison in Anchorage, Alaska, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division, announced on December 7, 2007. Evidence presented at trial showed that Kott solicited bribes from and took action to benefit the financial interests of VECO Corporation, a major Alaska oil services company while serving as a member in the state legislature.

Trial evidence, including more than 60 recordings of conversations involving Kott and former VECO executives, showed that Kott repeatedly promised to cast votes in VECO's favor on a key petroleum production tax proposal pending before the Alaska legislature, in exchange for cash, checks and the promise of a future job with VECO.

Former Congressional Chief of Staff Pleads Guilty To Honest Services Fraud Conspiracy

Russell James Caso, Jr., 34, of Rockville, Md., a former Chief of Staff to a Member of the U.S. House of Representatives, pled guilty on December 7, 2007 to conspiracy to commit honest services wire fraud, the Justice Department announced. According to the evidence presented by the government at the plea hearing, Caso served as a Chief of Staff from 2005 until 2007. His guilty plea stems from his relationship with a firm that had a stated mission of helping American businesses to operate in Russia and facilitating the flow of trade between the United States and Russia. Caso is cooperating with the Justice Department's ongoing investigation.

Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey Honors Medal of Valor Recipients



Attorney General Mukasey stands with four recipients of the Public Safety Officer Medal of Valor at a December 12, 2007, ceremony in the Attorney General's Conference Room. From left to right are Kirk Van Orsdel; Todd M. Myers; Attorney General Mukasey; David M. Loving; and Kevin M. Howland. Not pictured is recipient Brian D. Rothell. For more on the recipients, visit the Office of Justice Programs homepage at <http://www.ojp.gov>.

Department of Justice Provides \$1.7 Million to Help Victims of Identity Theft and Fraud

The Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) announced \$1.7 million in grant funds to provide direct assistance to victims of identity theft and financial fraud on December 10, 2007. The awards will expand existing services and strengthen law enforcement's response to victims of identity theft and financial fraud nationwide.

"The Department of Justice recognizes the tragic consequences to those affected by identity theft and is committed to tackling this problem by giving victim service organizations and local law enforcement the resources to provide a measure of relief to victims," said Cybele Daley, Acting Assistant Attorney General for OJP.

The funding, awarded through OJP's Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) earlier this year, is given to existing national, regional, state and local victim service organizations that are currently providing direct assistance to victims and will collaboratively expand their efforts to help identity additional theft and fraud victims.

The awards are a direct outcome of efforts made by the President's Task Force on Identity Theft. The Task Force is co-chaired by the Attorney General and the Federal Trade Commission Chairman.

More information on identity theft and fraud can be found at <http://www.idtheft.gov>.

Lighting Ceremony of National Chanukah Menorah



Attorney General Mukasey participates at the Lighting Ceremony of the National Chanukah Menorah at the Ellipse in Washington, D.C. The event, hosted by American Friends of Lubavitch, was held on December 5, 2007.

Attorney General Delivers Remarks at the National Association of Attorneys General 2007 Winter Meeting



On November 29, 2007, Attorney General Mukasey delivered remarks at the National Association of Attorneys General Winter Meeting where he announced that since the tragic shootings at Virginia Tech, states had doubled the information on prohibiting mental health history available to the FBI's gun background check system and encouraged continued cooperation in this program.

Department of Justice Officials and Community Partners Hold Project Safe Childhood Conference

The Department of Justice hosted the 2007 Project Safe Childhood (PSC) National Conference in St. Louis, Missouri on December 4 - 6. This second national conference focused on PSC's partnerships and successful strategies to combat the problem of online child exploitation.

Presenters and attendees included Attorney General Michael B. Mukasey and Acting Deputy Attorney General Craig Morford along with other senior officials from the Justice Department. Experts on the behavior of sex offenders and their victims, federal, state and local prosecutors, law enforcement officials and community leaders also participated in the conference.

Project Safe Childhood is a Department of Justice initiative that aims to combat the proliferation of technology-facilitated sexual exploitation crimes against children. The threat of sexual predators soliciting children for physical sexual contact is well-known and serious; the danger of the production, distribution, and possession of child pornography is equally dramatic and disturbing.

The Department of Justice is committed to the safety and well-being of every child and has placed a high priority on combating sexual exploitation of minors. Through a network of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and advocacy organizations, PSC serves to coordinate efforts to protect our children by investigating and prosecuting online sexual predators.

Project Safe Childhood was announced by the Justice Department on February 15, 2006, and was formally launched on May 17, 2006.

NATIONAL SECURITY NEWS

Two Plead Guilty to Domestic Terrorism Charges of Conspiring to Attack Military Facilities, Jewish Targets

Two men who were part of a domestic terrorist cell pled guilty on December 14, 2007, to federal terrorism charges, admitting that they conspired to attack United States military operations, "infidels," and Israeli and Jewish facilities in the Los Angeles area.

The two men – Kevin James, who formed the terror group while in a California state prison, and Levar Washington, who was recruited by James while in state prison and recruited others into the plot – pleaded guilty to conspiring to wage war against the United States.

A third member of the radical Islamic organization which James dubbed Jam'iyyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh, or JIS – Gregory Patterson – is expected to plead guilty to the terrorism conspiracy charge on a later date. The fourth member of JIS named in an indictment – Hammad Samana – has been found unfit to stand trial and is currently receiving psychiatric care at a federal prison facility.

Additional Defendants Plead Guilty to Obstruction of Justice in U.S. Investigation of Luis Posada Carriles

Five associates of Cuban exile Luis Posada Carriles pled guilty in the Western District of Texas to charges of obstruction of justice in connection with the U.S. government's investigation of Posada Carriles, Michael J. Mullaney, Acting U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas announced on December 13, 2007.

Late yesterday, Ruben Lopez-Castro, 69, and Jose Pujol, 78, each entered pleas of guilty to a one-count superseding criminal information that charged each defendant with obstruction of justice.

On December 3, 2007, Ernesto Abreu also pled guilty to one count of obstruction of justice in the Western District of Texas in connection with the same investigation. On November 16, 2007, two additional defendants, Osvaldo Mitat and Santiago Alvarez each entered pleas of guilty to obstruction of justice in the case. Sentencing hearing for Abreu, Mitat and Alvarez are scheduled for February 1, 2008.

ARTICLES - Office of Public Affairs and Office of Intergovernmental and Public Liaison; **PICTURES** - DOJ Photography; Photo of the Lighting of the National Menorah courtesy of American Friends of Lubavitch; Photo of the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) Winter Meeting courtesy of NAAG