



U.S. Department of Justice

**Stephen J. Murphy
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Michigan**

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For Immediate Release:

Contact: Gina Balaya (313) 226-9758
Stephen Moore, IRS CI (313) 234-2410

April 30, 2008

EVENT: Indictment

Defendant: Trent Chamblis, Jr.

DETROIT MAN ARRAIGNED ON TAX EVASION CHARGES

Trent Chamblis, Jr., of Detroit, was arraigned on an indictment charging him with five counts of tax evasion, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced.

Mr. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Special Agent in Charge Maurice Aouate, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division.

According to court records, during 2001 through 2005 tax years, Chamblis, Jr. filed fraudulent Form W-4s with his employer falsely claiming that he was "Exempt" from income taxes. Employers use the IRS Form W-4 to determine the amount of tax withholdings that are needed to be deducted from an employee's wages. During these years, Chamblis, Jr. failed to report his income to the Internal Revenue Service, as required by law, receiving approximately \$400,000 in taxable income, with a tax due and owing of approximately \$74,000.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy stated, "I hope this case sends a clear signal to those who seek to avoid taxes through illegal means. No one enjoys paying taxes, but taxpayers should pay their fair share."

“The law is crystal clear,” said Aouate. “Everybody has a duty to pay their taxes.”

Tax evasion carries a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment and a \$100,000 fine, per count.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

United States Attorney Murphy thanked the IRS Criminal Investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Gary M. Felder.



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For Immediate Release:

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May 1, 2008

EVENT: Sentenced

Defendant: Daryl Engelhardt

**FORMER POSTAL EMPLOYEE SENTENCED FOR MAKING FALSE STATEMENTS TO
OBTAIN FEDERAL EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION BENEFITS AND MAIL FRAUD**

A former employee of the United States Postal Service, was sentenced to six months custody after his conviction for four counts of mail fraud, two counts of making a false statement to obtain federal employee's compensation and two counts of making a false statement to a government agency, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today.

Murphy was joined in the announcement by Scott Caspall of the United States Postal Service, Office of Inspector General and Gordon Heddell of the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General.

Daryl Engelhardt, 42, of Columbus, Michigan was sentenced to the custody of the Bureau of Prison for a term of six months, to be followed by a two year term of supervised release with the first six months to be served in home confinement in U.S. District Court by Judge David Lawson. The court also ordered that Englehardt pay restitution in the amount of \$40,831.90 to the United States Postal Service.

The case was investigated jointly by the United States Postal Service, Office of

Inspector General and the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. The evidence at trial showed, on January 25, 2005, Englehardt applied for and received workers' compensation benefits for an alleged on-the-job back injury. On August 1, 2006, agents of the United States Postal Service received information that Engelhardt had been observed operating an air brush tattoo booth at the Bologna State Fair in Bologna, Michigan. Agents observed and in some incidents video taped Engelhardt operating his air brush tattoo booth at five separate fairs in Michigan, including Goodells, Imlay City, Armada, Marine City and Richmond.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "Collecting worker's compensation benefits that are undeserved is fraud, plain and simple. Such conduct diverts money from the government and from those with rightful claims."

Scott Caspall, Area Special Agent in Charge, Office of Inspector General, United States Postal Service stated, "The sentence received by Mr. Engelhardt today should act as a strong deterrent to others who may be thinking of defrauding the workers' compensation system. Scam the system and you're going to lose your job, your benefits and you're going to jail. And you'll have to pay back the compensation that you fraudulently obtained.

"This office remains firmly committed to aggressively investigating those who would fraudulently obtain Federal employee compensation benefits," said Gordon Heddell, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Labor. "Together with the United States Attorney's Office and our other law enforcement partners we will continue to dedicate resources to protecting the integrity of the Department of Labor's benefit programs."

The workers' compensation program exists to help employees who are injured on the job. It's a great program and has provided disability benefits to thousands of employees since it started back in 1916. Last year alone the Postal Service paid claimants nearly a billion dollars. However, a small percentage of employees -- like Mr. Engelhardt -- abuse the system, costing the Postal Service millions of dollars in fraudulent claims. When there are indications of fraud, the Postal Service's Office of Inspector General steps in. Inspector General investigative

efforts, as in the Engelhardt case, saved the Postal Service over \$200 million in long-term costs last year alone. Removing Mr. Engelhardt from the Postal Service employment and the disability roles will save the USPS over \$1,000,000 in future costs."

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Regina R. McCullough.



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May 2, 2008

EVENT: Guilty Plea

Defendant: James Laich

NOVI MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO POSSESSION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

A 42-year-old Novi, Michigan man, who possessed over six hundred images of child pornography pleaded guilty in federal court yesterday, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced. Joining in the announcement was Brian Moskowitz, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement in Detroit.

James Laich pleaded guilty to possession of child pornography before United States District Judge Victoria Roberts in Detroit, Michigan.

The information presented to the court at the time of the plea established that during February, 2005, Laich possessed child pornography images, received via the Internet. These images primarily consisted of prepubescent children posing nude and engaging in sexually explicit acts with adults.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "Federal laws targeting the child pornography trade aim to eliminate the victimization of children everywhere, because those who possess child pornography create the market for images of child sexual abuse. We will

prosecute these crimes vigorously.” Murphy also praised the efforts of Special Agents Mark Langenderfer and Dave Dominique for their work in conjunction with the Melvindale Police Department. Murphy stated, “The professionalism and investigative tactics employed by these agents facilitated a thorough administration of justice.”

Possession of child pornography is punishable by a maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$250,000 dollars. A plea agreement signed by the defendant calls for a term of imprisonment of 78-97 months. Sentencing is scheduled for July 14, 2008 at 2:00 p.m.

U.S. Attorney Murphy noted that this prosecution is part of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Project Safe Childhood initiative. In February 2006, Project Safe Childhood was launched as a nationwide initiative designed to protect children from online exploitation and abuse. Led by the U.S. Attorneys Offices, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.projectsafechildhood.gov.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Sarah Cohen and Eaton Curtis.



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George Krappmann -ATF (313) 202-3504

May 2, 2008

EVENT: Guilty Plea

Defendant: Terry Allen Crooks

**SOUTHFIELD MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO
ARSON FIRE AT CHEETAH'S STRIP CLUB**

A Southfield man pleaded guilty today to maliciously damaging by fire, a building used in an activity affecting interstate commerce, specifically, Cheetah's On the Strip Gentlemen's Club, located at 19245 W. 8 Mile Road, Detroit, Michigan, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today.

Murphy was joined in the announcement by Thomas E. Brandon, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Terry Allen Crooks, 25, entered the plea before the Honorable Gerald E. Rosen in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan in Detroit.

The information presented to the Court at the time of the plea, and facts revealed in previously filed pretrial motions, established that Crooks had been an employee of a cleaning company used by Cheetah's for after-hours cleaning and, as a result, had a key to the building. On March 2, 2005, Crooks was told by his supervisor that Cheetah's determined that Crooks had been stealing Keno Lottery tickets from its on-site terminal after hours, and had terminated the cleaning contract. On March 3, 2005, at around 5:30am, Crooks returned to Cheetah's,

entered the building with his key, went to the basement and spread and ignited gasoline there so as to burn down the building, hoping to destroy evidence of his theft of lottery tickets. This activity was captured on surveillance video, which survived the fire. Enhancement of the low-light and poor quality surveillance tape by the Michigan State Police resulted in the investigator's determination that the perpetrator was wearing a distinctive jacket bearing a "Davoucci" logo on the back. Crooks wore the same jacket to an interview with agents several weeks after the fire. The agents immediately recognized the jacket as identical to that worn by the arsonist. Crooks was charged shortly thereafter.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "The risks of danger to the lives of people, as well as the losses to property that it causes, make arson a crime that we take very seriously. This is particularly true when the fire was set in a busy commercial area."

Special Agent in Charge Brandon said, "The crime of arson is one of the most difficult types of cases to solve. This guilty plea is the result of solid investigative work. ATF would like to commend the Michigan State Police who provided the video enhancement that showed Crooks setting fire to the location. This video enhancement was crucial to Crooks entering his plea of guilty."

Crooks remains in custody pending sentencing by Judge Rosen now set for July 30, 2008 at 1:30. He faces up to 63 months in custody (a 5 year minimum term is mandatory by statute), along with a \$250,000 fine.

United States Attorney Murphy commended the special agents of the ATF whose investigation led to this successful prosecution. Mr. Murphy also commended the Michigan State Police, whose expertise in enhancing the surveillance video was critical to solving the case.



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May 2, 2008

EVENT: Sentenced

Defendant: Ahmad Khilia Daniels

JACKSON MICHIGAN MAN CONVICTED OF DRUG CONSPIRACY

Ahmad Khilia Daniels, of Jackson, Michigan, was found guilty by a federal jury in Ann Arbor, Michigan on four counts of an Indictment charging him with crack cocaine and heroin conspiracy, as well as federal firearms violations, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today.

Mr. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Special Agent in Charge Thomas E. Brandon, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and Chief Matthew Heins, Jackson Police Department.

The jury deliberated for approximately two hours before returning the verdict, concluding a trial that began on April 22, 2008, before United States District Judge John Corbett O'Meara.

The evidence at trial showed that from late 2004 through March, 2006, DANIELS, along with co-defendants Labaron Wardlaw, Anthony Travis, Rodney Hollis, Nequita Jackson and others, conspired to possess and distribute over 50 grams of crack cocaine and a quantity of heroin, in the city of Jackson, Michigan. DANIELS and his co-defendants transported half a kilogram of crack cocaine and an ounce of heroin from Detroit to Jackson almost every week.

Several homes in the Jackson area were used to sell and house the drugs. During the course of the investigation DANIELS sold crack cocaine to an undercover ATF agent as part of a covert operation.

Testimony at the trial also established that ATF agents and officers of the Jackson Police Department executed a search warrant at DANIELS home located at 618 Center Street, Jackson, Michigan. A large quantity of crack cocaine, heroin, narcotics packaging materials, drug paraphernalia, three firearms and ammunition were recovered during the search. One of the firearms had an obliterated serial number, which is a federal offense..

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "This case concerned a significant crack cocaine ring running a Detroit-to-Jackson supply line of dangerous drugs that is now severed. I commend the ATF and the City of Jackson Police Department for their excellent investigative work which lead to this conviction."

Special Agent in Charge Brandon said, "Illegal drugs and guns go hand in hand and are a threat to the safety of our citizens and law enforcement officers. This conviction shows that ATF is dedicated to working with our state and local law enforcement partners to reduce violent crime by targeting those individuals who use guns to protect their drugs and drug proceeds."

The defendant faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison based on the amount of drugs involved and the defendant's prior criminal history. A sentencing date has been set for July 29, 2008 at 2:00 pm in Ann Arbor.

Co-defendants Wardlaw, Travis, Hollis and Jackson have all pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing. Another defendant is currently awaiting trial.

The case was investigated by special agents of the ATF and task force agents of the Jackson Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David Portelli and Susan Gillooly.



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May 13, 2008

EVENT: Guilty Plea

Defendant: Labaron Wardlaw

**DEFENDANT SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS IN PRISON
ON DRUG CONSPIRACY CHARGES**

A Defendant, who operated a narcotic trafficking conspiracy in Jackson, MI, was sentenced to a term of imprisonment of 15 years, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Thomas Brandon, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Sentenced by U.S. District Judge John Corbett O'Meara was Labaron Wardlaw, 34, of Detroit. Wardlaw entered a guilty plea to Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute Cocaine Base on August 9, 2007. The maximum statutory penalty for that offense is life imprisonment.

The conspiracy, headed by Wardlaw, operated from approximately October 2005 until

March 24, 2006. The conspiracy involved in excess of 1.5 kilograms of cocaine base. Cocaine base was sold from several houses and sales locations in and around the City of Jackson, MI. The remaining co-conspirators will be sentenced in June and July, 2008.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, " Project Safe Neighborhoods targets some of the most dangerous offenders who threaten the safety of our communities with their criminal operations. I am pleased that our federal enforcement efforts in Jackson, Michigan, and particularly that the Jackson County authorities and the ATF's collaborative investigations, resulted in the significant prison sentence handed down today."

Special Agent in Charge Brandon said, "Illegal drugs and guns go hand in hand and are a threat to the safety of our citizens and law enforcement officers. This sentence shows that ATF is dedicated to working with our state and local law enforcement partners to reduce violent crime by targeting those individuals who use guns to protect their drugs and drug proceeds."

The investigation of this case has been conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, with cooperation and assistance from the City of Jackson Police Department and the Jackson County Prosecutor's Office. The case has been prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys David Portelli and Susan E. Gillooly.



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May 13, 2008

EVENT: Sentenced

Defendant: Milton "Butch" Jones

**DRUG RING LEADER MILTON "BUTCH" JONES SENTENCED
ON FEDERAL DRUG VIOLATION**

Milton "Butch" Jones was sentenced yesterday to 360 months in federal prison as a result of his guilty plea to federal drug charges involving two homicides, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today.

Mr. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Robert Corso, Special Agent in Charge, Drug Enforcement Administration, Andrew G. Arena, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation and Chief Ella Bully-Cummings, Detroit Police Department.

Jones, 53, of Detroit, Michigan, was sentenced in United States District Court in Ann Arbor before Judge John Corbett O'Meara.

The information presented to the court at the time of the plea showed that between 1995 and 2001, Jones supervised the activities of at least five individuals in a series of federal narcotics violations that included the distribution of at least 5 kilograms of cocaine and quantities of marijuana at several locations in the 3700 block of Monterey Street in Detroit. In addition to the narcotic distribution activities on Monterey Street, which the participants

referred to collectively as the "Dog Pound," the locations were also utilized to plan the robberies, kidnaping and intentional killings of rival drug traffickers and their associates. These activities included the murders of Mark Grice, and Antoine Carruthers by at least two other participants acting in concert with Jones.

"Drug trafficking is born of greed and begets nothing but violence and more crime. Ring leaders can expect to do substantial stretches of prison time, as we see reflected in today's 30-year sentence," United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said. "I salute the dedication and tireless efforts of the entire law enforcement team who worked together to bring down this organization. Their dedication reflects the finest in cooperation and teamwork between federal and local law enforcement agencies."

Special Agent in Charge Corso stated, "This sentence assures the community that Milton "Butch" Jones, a violent drug trafficker will remain incarcerated well past his 80th birthday. He is a dangerous man and the community is a much safer place with him behind bars. This sentence reflects the tireless efforts of the men and women of the DEA and our counterparts in the FBI and Detroit Police Department to apprehend and convict violent drug traffickers who choose to operate in this community. "

Andrew G. Arena, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Detroit, Michigan, advised "We want to send a message to the community that this type of activity committed by violent street gangs will not be tolerated and we will continue to aggressively investigate violent street gang activity."

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys William Sauget and Regina McCullough.



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May 15, 2008

EVENT: Guilty Plea

Defendant: Frank Vallecorsa

**FORMER PRESIDENT OF AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL, INC. PLEADS
GUILTY TO EMBEZZLING APPROXIMATELY \$745,000 IN PENSION FUNDS**

The former head of American International, Inc., pleaded guilty today to a one-count Information charging him with the embezzlement of approximately \$745,000 from two company pension funds, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today.

Murphy was joined in the announcement by Gordon S. Heddell, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General, Office of Labor Racketeering and Fraud Investigation.

Frank Vallecorsa, 77, of Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, entered the guilty plea in United States District Court before Judge David M. Lawson.

The information presented to the court at the time of the plea showed that between February 2001 and June 2003, while Vallecorsa was heading American International, Inc., he embezzled approximately \$745,000 from two company pension funds in order to keep his financially-depressed company afloat. At the time, Vallecorsa was the sole trustee of both employee pension plans.

Vallecorsa faces up to 60 months imprisonment and a fine of up to \$250,000. Vallecorsa will also be required to make full restitution to those whose pension funds he unlawfully converted.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "Embezzlement of employee pension funds is a betrayal of the duties that corporate officers owe their company, its workers, and the public."

A sentencing hearing was set by Judge Lawson for 3 p.m. on August 25, 2008.

United States Attorney Murphy specifically thanked the Employment Benefits Security Administration of the Department of Labor and the Detroit Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Labor for its hard work in conducting the investigation of this case.



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For Immediate Release:

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May 16, 2008

EVENT: Sentenced

Defendant: Hani Mortada et al

FINAL TWO DEFENDANTS SENTENCED

IN MAJOR MORTGAGE FRAUD CONSPIRACY ON FEDERAL NARCOTICS CHARGES

Brothers and Dearborn residents Hani Mortada, 29, and Wael Mortada, 28, were sentenced today following their guilty pleas to participating in a 10-defendant mortgage fraud conspiracy, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today. Murphy was joined in the announcement by Andrew G. Arena, Special Agent In Charge of the Detroit Field Office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The Mortadas were the last of ten defendants to be sentenced in this case. In October, 2007, Safi Sobh, 35, also of Dearborn, was sentenced to serve ten years in prison after being convicted by a jury of leading the mortgage fraud conspiracy that obtained inflated appraisals on residential properties, created false applications and obtained millions of dollars in bank loans.

Hani Mortada was sentenced to serve 20 months in prison; to pay restitution of \$648,750; and to serve 5 years under the supervision of the Court upon his release from custody. Because he was determined to be a lesser player in the fraud scheme, Wael Mortada was sentenced to serve 3 years under the supervision of the Court, the first 6 months

in a Community Corrections Center; to complete 300 hours of community service; and to pay restitution of \$82,800. The sentences were imposed by U.S. District Judge Patrick J. Duggan.

The evidence presented during Safi Sobh's three-week trial established that between July 2002 and December 2005, the conspirators successfully corrupted the system of checks and balances lending institutions rely upon to determine how much money they can safely lend on a property, and whether a particular borrower is qualified to repay the loan. Ohio Savings Bank, Commercial Federal Bank and several other federally insured financial institutions relied upon the false representations of the conspirators and loaned millions of dollars, most of which has not been recovered. Working out of his realty, The Success Group, Sobh hand-picked and taught his co-conspirators how to commit these crimes. Co-conspirators (including the Mortada brothers) acted as corrupt loan originators, processors, appraisers, and straw buyers.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "Mortgage fraud is a very serious problem in our community and across the nation. Today's sentences of the last of the ten conspirators makes very clear that every individual who participates in a scheme designed to undermine the integrity of the banking system, whether they play a major role or a minor one, will be appropriately punished. The successful investigation of this highly complex and sophisticated case required a significant commitment of resources by the FBI and by my office, and I commend them for their efforts."

U.S. Attorney Murphy thanked the FBI for the successful investigation of the case, which was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Cynthia Oberg and Julie Beck.



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May 16, 2008

EVENT: Guilty Verdict

Defendant: Marcus Conway

**SAGINAW MAN CONVICTED
ON FEDERAL NARCOTICS CHARGES**

A 30-year-old Saginaw man was found guilty yesterday by a federal jury in Bay City on charges of distribution of cocaine base, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced today.

Murphy was joined in the announcement by Stephanie R. Shoemaker, Resident Agent in Charge, Flint Field Office, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Found guilty was Marcus Conway.

The jury deliberated for approximately two hours before returning the verdicts, concluding a three-day trial before United States District Judge Thomas Ludington.

The evidence presented at trial showed that Conway was trafficking in cocaine in the Saginaw area during 2007 and that he sold quantities of cocaine base on three separate occasions to a government informant in June and July of 2007. The indictment arose out of an investigation by federal and state law enforcement officers into drug trafficking activities of

street gangs in Saginaw, including a gang known as the Sunnyside Gang that is believed to have engaged in drug trafficking and various related crimes in the south side of the City of Saginaw for a number of years.

“The prosecution of gang-related drug trafficking is a high priority of my office. This case is a good example of the kind of results that can be obtained from effective state and federal cooperation,” United States Attorney Murphy said.

“This conviction shows that ATF is dedicated to working with our state and local law enforcement partners to reduce narcotic and other types of street crime by targeting those individuals who engage in illegal narcotics trafficking,” RAC Shoemaker said.

Murphy commended the work of the agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, state and local officers assigned to the Bay Area Narcotics Enforcement Team (BAYANET) and federal, state and local officers assigned to the Saginaw SAFE Streets in this investigation.

Conway has three prior convictions for felony drug offenses, as well as a perjury conviction. As a result of his prior drug convictions he is facing a mandatory-minimum sentence of ten years. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney James A. Brunson.