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**ARMED ROBBER SENTENCED TO OVER 50 YEARS IN PRISON
FOR PARTICIPATION IN NEW YORK CITY ROBBERY SPREE**

LEV L. DASSIN, the Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that ZACHARY BALLARD, a/k/a "Zachary Balard," a/k/a "Little Zachary," a/k/a "Boobie," 26, of Brooklyn, was sentenced today to 50 years and one month in prison for robbing multiple New York City businesses at gunpoint. BALLARD was found guilty by a jury in Manhattan federal court on July 23, 2008, of three counts of robbery affecting interstate commerce, three counts of brandishing a firearm during those robberies, and one count of conspiracy to commit robbery affecting interstate commerce, following a one-week jury trial before United States District Judge JED S. RAKOFF. According to the evidence at trial:

In October 2007, BALLARD and his coconspirator, ANTHONY STEELE, robbed five New York City businesses at gunpoint. The robberies followed a specific pattern in which the defendants entered the businesses wearing hooded sweatshirts and baseball caps, demanded to talk to the store manager, and forced the store employees to open the safe and cash register. After taking the cash, the robbers ordered the employees to count to twenty and fled the scene.

In one instance, on October 14, 2007, which ultimately led to their arrest, BALLARD and STEELE robbed a Duane Reade located at 617 West 181st Street in Manhattan. Just after 8:00 a.m., BALLARD approached the store's manager, racked his gun, pointed it at the manager, and demanded to be taken to the safe. The robbers forced the manager and another employee into the store's office and kept them at gunpoint while BALLARD and STEELE emptied the store's safe. A security video of the robbers leaving the Duane Reade following the robbery was made. A few weeks later, after local television news stations aired video clips, an anonymous tipster called NYPD's Crime Stoppers, leading to the robbers' identification.

On November 15, 2007, BALLARD was apprehended by detectives and agents of the New York City Police Department ("NYPD") and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives ("ATF") after attempting to outrun law enforcement by jumping out of an apartment window, falling three stories, breaking through a wooden awning, and scaling multiple walls and barbed wire fences. BALLARD has been remanded since his arrest.

In addition to the prison sentence, Judge RAKOFF ordered BALLARD to serve 3 years of supervised release. In sentencing BALLARD, Judge RAKOFF stated that BALLARD's "brutal robberies were undertaken for reasons that are still mind-boggling," including the purchase of "trendy clothes."

STEELE, 26, of Brooklyn, was sentenced on July 23, 2008, in Manhattan federal court to 14 years in prison for robbing multiple New York City businesses, and admitted to participating in twenty-two additional robberies between July 2007 and November 2007.

Mr. DASSIN praised the outstanding work of the ATF and the NYPD.

Assistant United States Attorneys BENJAMIN A. NAFTALIS and REBECCA MONCK RICIGLIANO are in charge of the prosecution.

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