

For Immediate Release
January 20, 2012

**TRACY ALLEN PROVINCE AND CASSLYN MAE WELCH PLEAD GUILTY
TO CARJACKING AND MURDER OF OKLAHOMA COUPLE**

ALBUQUERQUE – **Tracy Allen Province**, 44, of Indiana, and **Casslyn Mae Welch**, 45, of Arizona, have entered guilty pleas to numerous charges in a second superseding indictment arising out of the August 2, 2010 carjacking and murder of Gary and Linda Haas of Oklahoma, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales.

Mr. and Mrs. Haas were carjacked and murdered after Province and co-defendant John Charles McCluskey, 46, of Arizona, escaped from an Arizona state prison with the assistance of Welch on July 30, 2010. According to the criminal complaints that initiated the case, on August 2, 2010, McCluskey, Province and Welch carjacked Mr. and Mrs. Haas and their pickup truck and camping trailer at a rest area off Interstate 40 in Quay County, N.M. McCluskey allegedly shot and killed Mr. and Mrs. Haas in the trailer at a location between Santa Rosa and Tucumcari, N.M. Thereafter, McCluskey, Province and Welch allegedly drove the Haases' truck and trailer to a remote area in Guadalupe County, N.M., where they unhitched, burned and abandoned the trailer with the Haases' remains still inside. On August 4, 2010, the New Mexico State Police discovered the burned remains of Mr. and Mrs. Haas in the trailer. Province was arrested in Wyoming on August 9, 2010, and McCluskey and Welch were arrested in Arizona on August 19, 2010, following a nationwide, multi-agency manhunt.

This morning, Province and Welch admitted their involvement in the carjacking and murder of Mr. and Mrs. Haas during change of plea proceedings before U.S. District Judge Judith C. Herrera in federal court in Albuquerque.

Province pled guilty to nine of the 13 offenses charged in the second superseding

indictment, while Welch pled guilty to eight of the offenses. Specifically, Province and Welch each pled guilty to the following offenses: conspiracy to commit carjacking (Count 1); carjacking resulting in death (Count 2); conspiracy to interfere with commerce (Count 4); interference with commerce (Count 5); using and carrying firearms during and in relation to crimes of violence (Counts 6, 7, 9 and 10); and being fugitives in possession of firearms (Count 13). Province also pled guilty to being a felon in possession of firearms (Count 12).

The guilty pleas were entered pursuant to plea agreements with the U.S. Attorney's Office that contemplate dismissal of Counts 3 and 8, charging tampering with a witness and using a firearm during and in relation to the violent crime of tampering with a witness, against Province and Welch after the two are sentenced. In the plea agreements, Province and Welch admit conspiring and agreeing with each other and with McCluskey forcibly to take a pickup truck and trailer from Mr. and Mrs. Haas at gunpoint with the intention of killing them, if necessary, and then following through on their agreement. Both Province and Welch assert or imply that McCluskey shot and killed Mr. and Mrs. Haas at a location off of Interstate 40, and admit that they assisted McCluskey in moving the Haases' pickup truck and trailer, which contained the Haases' bodies, to another location where they set fire to the trailer with the Haases' bodies inside.

Under the terms of his plea agreement, Province will be sentenced to five consecutive terms of life imprisonment without the possibility of release. Welch faces a maximum penalty of life imprisonment under her plea agreement. Both remain in custody pending their sentencing hearings, which have yet to be scheduled.

McCluskey, Province and Welch initially were charged on September 29, 2010, in an indictment that included seven counts that carry a maximum sentence of death or life in prison

on conviction. A first superseding indictment was filed on December 29, 2011; it modified the original indictment by adding the Notice of Special Findings under a statute that provides for the imposition of the death penalty for a defendant who has been found guilty of a death-eligible offense after consideration of specific mitigating and aggravating factors identified. The second superseding indictment, which was filed on January 12, 2012, modified the “Notice of Special Findings,” by supplementing McCluskey’s prior criminal history.

McCluskey remains in custody pending trial on the second superseding indictment; his trial is scheduled to commence on March 11, 2013. An indictment is merely an accusation, and a defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

Although the second superseding indictment includes a Notice of Special Findings which preserves the United States’ ability to seek the death penalty against McCluskey, the United States has not yet indicated whether it will seek a sentence of death against McCluskey. A decision whether or not to seek the death penalty against a death-eligible defendant is made by the Attorney General of the United States based on the recommendation of the United States Attorney and after carefully considering each defendant’s background and the circumstances of the crime.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New Mexico State Police, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Linda Mott and Gregory J. Fouratt.

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