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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 29, 2004

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PRESS RELEASE

CONNECTICUT MAN SENTENCED TO 46 MONTHS IN PRISON FOR SMUGGLING HAZARDOUS MATERIALS ONBOARD A COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT

ROSLYNN R. MAUSKOPF, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, and **KENNETH M. MEAD**, Inspector General for United States Department of Transportation ("DOT"), announced that **BERNARD WILLIAMS** of Norwalk, Connecticut, was sentenced by United States District Judge Nina Gershon to 46 months in prison and 3 years of supervised release, and ordered to pay \$600 in restitution and a \$7,500 fine. **WILLIAMS** smuggled fourteen gallons of highly concentrated ammonia onboard a commercial flight from

Fort Myers, Florida, to LaGuardia Airport in Queens, New York. The type of ammonia that WILLIAMS transported was extremely toxic and had been classified as a hazardous material pursuant to DOT regulations.

On July 15, 2003, WILLIAMS was convicted after a two-week jury trial of the charge of recklessly transporting hazardous materials in violation of Title 49, United States Code, Section 46312. The evidence at trial established that, on February 15, 2002, WILLIAMS checked two large cardboard boxes containing fourteen one-gallon jugs of highly concentrated ammonia onboard a Spirit Airlines flight from Florida to New York. Each of the jugs contained a conspicuous label, which warned that the ammonia was a dangerous substance that could be the source of toxic vapors. WILLIAMS concealed these warning labels by transporting the ammonia in commercially sealed boxes that were marked as "Cat's Pride Kitty Litter." Once the flight was airborne, noxious fumes began to seep into the passenger cabin. Several passengers became nauseous and developed difficulty breathing after inhaling the fumes. A six-week old baby who was on the flight lost consciousness and had to be hospitalized. After the flight landed, it was determined that one of the fourteen ammonia jugs that WILLIAMS smuggled onboard had broken open, releasing the fumes that caused the passengers to become ill.

"BERNARD WILLIAMS recklessly risked the health and safety of over eighty passengers, including an infant child, by transporting toxic chemicals on a commercial flight," stated United States Attorney **ROSLYNN R. MAUSKOPF**. "What should have been a routine flight turned into a terrifying experience for the crew and passengers. The Court's sentence today sends a strong message that those who jeopardize the safety of our skies will be prosecuted

to the full extent of the law.” **Ms. MAUSKOPF** thanked the Federal Aviation Administration for its assistance in this case.

United States Department of Transportation Inspector General **KENNETH M. MEAD** stated, “The special agent of my New York office who investigated this matter worked closely with the Federal Aviation Administration and the Justice Department to bring this significant case to resolution. The transportation of hazardous material is an area in which the safety and security of the public intersect. The message here is that the Departments of Transportation and Justice are committed to strong enforcement of hazardous materials laws and regulations for the safety and security of the public.”

The government's case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Michael A. Asaro and Christina Dugger.

The Defendant:

Name: BERNARD WILLIAMS

DOB: 05/21/48

Residence: Norwalk, CT