



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

16 CUT THROAT GANG MEMBERS, ASSOCIATES INDICTED FOR DRUG-TRAFFICKING CONSPIRACIES, DRIVE-BY SHOOTINGS, ILLEGAL FIREARMS

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – John F. Wood, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced today that 16 members and associates of the Cut Throats gang in Columbia, Mo., have been indicted by a federal grand jury for their roles in two drug-trafficking conspiracies that involved several drive-by shootings and firearms violations.

Eric Sherron Coats, 21, his brother, **Koda Alshawn Coats**, 22, their mother, **Donna C. Coats**, 39, another brother, **Dametrell Koda Washington**, 27, **William Ricky Boyd**, 21, **Demarco Laron Burnett**, 24, **Tarron Montez Cason**, 25, **Cheviss Caron Denny**, 20, **Dajuan Anthony Harris**, 25, **Brandon James Isom**, 19, **Ryan Montez Kee**, 22, **William Harold Rogers**, 42, **Diondre Jamel Cooper**, 19, and **Robert Darnell Simmons**, 36, all of Columbia, **Michael Lee Stapleton**, 22, of Fayette, Mo., and **Robert Lee Jones**, 19, of Kansas City, Mo., were charged in a 34-count indictment returned under seal by a federal grand jury in Jefferson City on Thursday, Jan. 22, 2009. That indictment was unsealed and made public today upon the arrests and initial court appearances of several co-defendants.

The government has filed motions to detain without bond all of the defendants who were arrested today. Among the reasons cited in the detention motions is that these defendants are members and associates of a drug-trafficking gang in Columbia known as the Cut Throats. The motion alleges that the Cut Throats use violence to protect their illegal narcotics business, collect drug debts, and threaten and intimidate competitors. According to the detention motion, members of the Cut Throats are frequently armed and trade firearms among themselves. The activities of the Cut Throats have allegedly involved shootings, including three shootings which occurred in public places (gas stations) occupied predominantly by ordinary citizens who were not involved in the allegedly illegal activities of the Cut Throats or its competitors.

The federal indictment alleges that **Eric Coats**, **Koda Coats**, **Boyd**, **Denny**, **Harris**,

Jones, Cooper and Simmons participated in a violent drug-trafficking conspiracy in Columbia from January 2007 to September 2008. According to the indictment, they distributed crack cocaine, powder cocaine and marijuana in competition with rival individuals and groups in Columbia.

The indictment alleges that **Eric Coats, Koda Coats, Boyd, Denny, Harris, Jones, Cooper and Simmons** used firearms – which they possessed illegally – to intimidate, harass and injure others in order to reduce or limit competition, establish territory, or enforce debts. The indictment cites three drive-by shootings that occurred in furtherance of the drug-trafficking conspiracy – on June 2, 2007, near a Break Time gas station at 1000 Smiley Lane in Columbia, on Jan. 1, 2008, near a BP gas station at 800 Stadium Drive in Jefferson City, and on May 31, 2008, near a Petro Mart gas station at 3300 Falling Leaf Lane in Columbia. In each instance, the indictment says, a handgun was fired into a group of people and at least one person was injured.

The federal indictment also charges all 16 defendants with participating in a conspiracy to distribute and to possess with the intent to distribute cocaine and more than 50 grams of crack cocaine from January 2007 until Sept. 30, 2008.

In addition to the conspiracy charges, the indictment charges various defendants with 11 counts of possession with the intent to distribute crack cocaine and with 15 counts of using a telephone to facilitate the drug-trafficking conspiracy. **Jones** and **Kee** are also charged with one count of possession with the intent to distribute cocaine and marijuana.

Jones, Washington and Harris are each charged separately with one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm. **Jones** was allegedly in possession of a loaded SKS rifle on April 25, 2008, after having been convicted of unlawful use of a weapon. **Washington** was allegedly in possession of a Ruger .22-caliber long rifle and a Ruger 9X19 mm on Aug. 14, 2008, after having been convicted of possession of a controlled substance, operating a vehicle while revoked and trafficking in crack cocaine. **Harris** was allegedly in possession of a Glock handgun and an AK 47 .22-caliber rifle on Aug. 29, 2008, after having been convicted of trafficking in drugs, possession of a controlled substance. **Harris** was also charged with possession of a stolen firearm related to the Glock handgun.

Eric Coats was also charged with being an unlawful user of a controlled substance while in possession of a firearm. **Eric Coats** was allegedly in possession of a Ruger 9X19 mm on Aug. 14, 2008.

Wood cautioned that the charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Larry Miller and Anthony P. Gonzalez. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Columbia, Mo., Police Department, the Boone County, Mo., Prosecutor's Office, the Boone County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the Missouri State Highway Patrol Crime Lab and the Mo. Department of

Corrections.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow/index.html