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MENOMINEE CRACK COCAINE TRAFFICKER FOUND GUILTY

MARQUETTE, Mich. – A federal jury in Marquette found Jason Lamar Beard, 24, of Phoenix, Illinois, guilty of conspiracy involving more than 50 grams of cocaine base, or “crack” cocaine, U.S. Attorney Charles R. Gross announced today.

Beard went to trial in United States District Court in Marquette before Judge R. Allan Edgar on October 2, 2007. The jury began deliberating on the evening of October 3, and returned its verdict the next morning. The United States was represented in trial by Assistant United States Attorneys Maarten Vermaat and Paul D. Lochner.

Beard was indicted by a federal grand jury sitting in Marquette on February 27, 2007. This indictment was the result of a year long investigation by the Upper Peninsula Substance Enforcement Team (UPSET); the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); the Menominee County Sheriff; the Menominee Police Department; the Marinette (WI) County Sheriff; and the Marinette Police Department.

This investigation previously led to federal crack cocaine conspiracy convictions against Rex Traacey Furlough, Jr., Vicki Lynn Walton, James Jerome Green, Deborah Lee Green, and Robert Lee Turnbo; federal firearms convictions against Furlough, Walton, Shawn Allen Klatt,

and Brandon Benedict Smekjal; and federal crack cocaine distribution convictions against Joseph Alan Smith, and Mark Allen Keller, Jr. In addition, Sarah Elaine Erdman, who was implicated in the crack cocaine conspiracy, was allowed to enter the federal pre-trial diversion program.

The evidence presented at trial showed that Furlough had developed a drug distribution network that obtained crack and powder cocaine in the Chicago area and distributed it in Menominee and Marinette. Beard's role in the network was supervising several of the street-level dealers in Menominee.

Beard is scheduled to be sentenced on December 20, 2007, in Marquette, along with his co-defendant Rex Furlough. Beard faces a minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, and may receive a sentence of up to life.

U.S. Attorney Gross commended the six different federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies involved in this case for their outstanding work and cooperation. A press conference regarding this case is scheduled for December 20, 2007, following the sentencing.

This case was prosecuted on behalf of the United States of America by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Maarten Vermaat and Paul D. Lochner.

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