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**LEADER OF BLOODS GANG IN HARFORD COUNTY SENTENCED
FOR ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF A FIREARM**

BALTIMORE, Maryland - United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein announces that today U.S. District Judge Richard D. Bennett sentenced Eric Nikwan Barnett, age 26, of Edgewood, Maryland to 80 months in prison, followed by 3 years of supervised release, for possession of a firearm by a prohibited person. Barnett's possession of a firearm was illegal because he had previously been convicted of possession of narcotics with intent to distribute.

During the sentencing hearing today before Judge Richard D. Bennett, the government presented evidence that Barnett was the organizer and a principal leader of a chapter of the Bloods street gang, established in Harford County in the fall of 2003. An investigator from the Harford County Sheriff's Department testified about acts of violence committed by persons associated with the Bloods gang in Harford County in 2003-2005.

According to the statement of facts presented at Barnett's guilty plea, two Glock .40 caliber handguns were stolen in October 2003. One of those weapons was subsequently recovered by Maryland State Police Troopers during a search at an address on Meadowood Court, Edgewater, Maryland on the morning of January 4, 2004, following the arrest of Eddie Martin, age 24, of Edgewood, Maryland. Martin had threatened several persons at gunpoint at that location.

During the follow-up investigation, one of the victims on Meadowood Court advised the Maryland State Police that he had recently observed an individual he knew as "Tec" in possession of a black .40 caliber handgun. The description of the firearm provided by this witness was consistent with the still-missing Glock .40 caliber semi-automatic pistol. The investigators subsequently determined that Barnett was the person the witness knew as "Tec."

On January 7, 2004, the investigators obtained and executed a search warrant for the apartment on Edgewater Drive where Barnett lived with his girlfriend. The search recovered a black pancake-style, Glock .40 caliber handgun holster, along with quantities of marijuana and crack cocaine packaged for distribution. Barnett was arrested. He advised law enforcement officers that he knew what the police were looking for and that he had placed it in the trunk of his girlfriend's car, which was parked in front of the apartment. A search of the car resulted in the recovery of a

loaded Glock .40 caliber pistol, one magazine, and sixteen rounds of .40 caliber ammunition from the trunk. This firearm proved to be the second missing Glock stolen in October.

Eddie Martin was indicted on December 6, 2005 on a federal charge of illegal possession of a firearm and is awaiting extradition from New York State, where he is presently serving a sentence for violation of parole.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Harford County Sheriff's Office and the Maryland State Police (Bel Air Barracks) for the investigative work in this case. Mr. Rosenstein praised Assistant United States Attorney Jefferson M. Gray, who prosecuted the case.