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TOP-RANKING DECAVALCANTE CRIME FAMILY LEADERS
CONVICTED OF MURDER AND RACKETEERING IN FEDERAL COURT

JAMES B. COMEY, United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced today that a Manhattan Federal court jury convicted three high-ranking leaders of the Decavalcante Organized Crime Family of La Cosa Nostra, on a variety of racketeering and related charges. The principal charges included four homicides, the 1989 murder of Fred Weiss, the 1989 murder of Joseph Garofano, the 1991 murder of Louis LaRasso, and the 1991 murder of John D'Amato.

Convicted today were STEFANO VITABILE, the Consigilere of the Family, and PHILIP ABRAMO and GIUSEPPE "Pino" SCHIFILLITI, both Caporegimes or Captains in the Family. VITABILE, ABRAMO, and SCHIFILLITI were found guilty after a seven-week trial and two days of deliberations.

Two other co-conspirators involved in the murder of Lou LaRasso -- Soldiers Louis "Louie Eggs" Consalvo and Gregory Rago -- pled guilty just before jury selection began in April.

VITABILE was convicted of five separate counts, including two counts under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization ("RICO") statutes, two counts of conspiring to commit murder in violation of the Violent Crime in Aid of Racketeering ("VICAR") statute, and one count of conspiracy to commit extortion.

ABRAMO was convicted of four separate counts, the two RICO counts and two counts relating to conspiracy to commit loansharking.

SCHIFILLITI was convicted of six separate counts, including the RICO counts, two VICAR murder conspiracies, two counts relating to conspiracy to commit loansharking, and one count of conspiracy to commit extortion.

The jury found that VITABILE had committed five separate acts of racketeering. These included the murders of Louis LaRasso and John D'Amato, the conspiracy to murder Thomas Salvata, the conspiracy to murder Frank D'Amato, and a conspiracy to commit extortion.

The extortion conspiracy proved at trial involved the Decavalcante Family's 20-year control of much of the construction industry in the northern New Jersey area. The trial evidence showed millions of dollars were extorted from construction-industry contractors in various "shake-downs".

The jury found that ABRAMO committed six separate acts

of racketeering. These included the murders of Fred Weiss, Joseph Garofano, and Louis LaRasso, conspiracies to murder Daniel Annunziata and Gaetano "Corky" Vastola, loansharking, and securities fraud.

As to the securities fraud, the jury heard extensive testimony about a sophisticated "pump and dump" scheme involving the 1995 initial public offering of stock in SC&T International, Inc., in which investors were bilked out of millions of dollars. SCHIFILLITI's pattern of racketeering activities included the murder of LaRasso, a conspiracy to murder Frank D'Amato, a loansharking conspiracy, and the construction industry extortion conspiracy.

The testimony at trial established that VITABILE was the consigliere of the Family for over 30 years, and that ABRAMO and SCHIFILLITI were caporegimes for 20 years. The testimony also established that the Decavalcante Family engaged in wide-ranging acts of racketeering for over 100 years, including testimony from multiple witnesses that it is the oldest Cosa Nostra Family in the Nation. The proof at trial (including testimony of cooperating witnesses and tape-recorded conversations of co-conspirators not on trial) established that the Decavalcante Family murdered and conspired to murder numerous individuals they suspected of cooperating with the Government.

VITABILE and SCHIFILLITI were acquitted of one conspiracy to murder; ABRAMO and SCHIFILLITI were acquitted on one loansharking count (and convicted on two others).

Chief United States District Judge MICHAEL B. MUKASEY scheduled October 17, 2003 for sentencing. All three defendants face a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of release.

Mr. COMEY praised the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the New York City Police Department for their investigation of this case.

Assistant United States Attorneys JOHN M. HILLEBRECHT, MICHAEL G. McGOVERN, MIRIAM E. ROCAH are in charge of the prosecution.

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