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PRESS RELEASE

On September 10, 2007, the Circuit Court of Halifax County for the first time convicted a man of felony violations of Virginia's gang statutes. Zeleig M. Morton of Spring Avenue, South Boston entered guilty pleas before Judge William L. Wellons to numerous counts of gang participation.

According to the Halifax Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, the charges resulted from an extensive investigation conducted by the South Boston Police Department, in consultation with Commonwealth's Attorney Kim Slayton White and Regional Drug Prosecutor Brendan U. Dunning and with assistance by a Virginia State Police Special Agent. "South Boston Police Department's investigations revealed an organized, violent group of individuals who were participating in drug activity over a number of years," commented Mr. Dunning.

The court heard a proffer of evidence by the Commonwealth that the gang had a defined territory in South Boston and that they distributed drugs in that area. In addition, the court heard that the gang would enforce its territory by acts of violence.

"This prosecution uses Virginia's tough gang laws to send a message to gangs – we will not tolerate you in Halifax County," said Mrs. White. She further commended the investigators at the South Boston Police Department for their organized, compelling and thorough case preparation.

Morton, who also entered guilty pleas to conspiracy and drug distribution, was sentenced on the gang charges to 35 years in prison with all but 5 years suspended. He received an additional 70 years in prison with all but another 5 years suspended on the conspiracy and drug charges.