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• U.S. Attorney's office WICHITA – A member of a Dodge City street gang charged in a federal racketeering case has pleaded guilty, U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom said today.

Russell Worthey, 24, Dodge City, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit racketeering and one count of possessing and discharging a firearm in a crime of violence. In his plea, Worthey admitted he was a member of the Norteno street gang when he was involved in the murder of Israel Peralta on June 8, 2009, in Dodge City. Worthey aided and abetted in the murder as well as an assault with deadly weapons upon the victims.

On the day of the murder, Worthey and co-defendant Anthony Wright were driving around Dodge City in Wright's car. In a trailer park in the south part of town they ran across a group of Hispanic males at 201 E. McArtor, Lot 24. The males appeared to be members of a rival gang, the Surenos. Later that day, Worthey, Wright and two other Nortenos went to the trailer park. Worthey was in the front passenger seat and Wright was driving. Two other Nortenos were riding in the back seat. When Wright parked the car, the two Nortenos in the back seat got out and ran toward the Hispanic males at Lot 24, with Worthey and Wright following.

The two Nortenos in the lead fired at the men at Lot 24. Israel Peralta was struck several times by the gunfire and died from the injuries. Mariano Sorano also was struck by gunfire. The four Nortenos got back in their car and drove away from the scene.

In his plea, Worthey admitted that as a member of the Nortenos, he was part of an ongoing criminal enterprise. The gang used murder, robbery, assault and the threat of violence to protect and expand its operations.

He was one of 23 defendants indicted in May 2012 under a federal law called the RICO Act (Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act.

Worthey is set for sentencing July 29. He faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in federal prison and a fine up to $250,000 on the conspiracy charge, and a penalty of not less than 10 years and a fine up to $250,000 on the firearms charged.

Co-defendants who have pleaded guilty include:

• Jason Najera, who was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison.

• Humberto Ortiz, who was sentenced to 46 months.

• Jose Neave, who is set for sentencing July 8.

• Anthony Wright, who is set for sentencing July 8.

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