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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DETROIT - David Gerald Blake, of St. Clair Shores, Michigan, was sentenced on September 18, 2007 to two years of probation, three months home detention with electronic monitoring and a \$2,000 fine for operating a recreational vessel on Lake St. Clair in a grossly negligent manner. At the sentencing hearing, U. S. District Judge Patrick J. Duggan also ordered Mr. Blake to complete a U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliary boater safety course prior to operating any pleasure craft. Blake pleaded guilty to this offense on May 17, 2007.

According to court documents, on August 24, 2005, Mr. Blake was operating a high performance pleasure craft and nearly collided with a smaller Coast Guard vessel assigned to Coast Guard Station St. Clair Shores. Mr. Blake was traveling at a high rate of speed, at night, without a proper lookout and in an area congested with sailing vessels. He was also operating his vessel while impaired by alcohol. An attentive lookout on the Coast Guard vessel alerted the vessel's coxswain in time for the coxswain to take evasive action to avoid a collision. The Coast Guard eventually caught up with Mr. Blake to conduct a boarding. When the Coast Guard pulled alongside Blake he refused to comply with instructions, was verbally abusive to the Coast Guard crew and maneuvered his vessel to prevent the Coast Guard from conducting a boarding. The boarding officers eventually were able to board Mr. Blake's vessel. Mr. Blake was arrested by special agents of the Coast Guard Investigative Service once brought ashore by the Coast Guard boarding officer

U. S. Attorney Stephen J. Murphy said, "Our office is committed to protecting the public from the dangers of unruly and intoxicated boaters. Boaters who mix drinking and intoxication with transportation on our district's waterways risk collision with one of the many sailing vessels or even a Coast Guard boat that might be sailing nearby. Aggressive prosecution of these types of cases, we hope, will help avoid results that might have been tragic."

According to Captain Patrick Brennan., Commander, Coast Guard Sector Detroit, since Mr. Blake's arrest, Congress has passed new legislation, which imposes stiff sanctions on boat masters or operators who fail to slow or stop their vessel, obstruct or impede a boarding or providing false information to a Federal law enforcement officer during a boarding of a vessel. A master or operator who violates this new law may be imprisoned for not more than 5 years, fined \$250,000 or both. "In most cases boaters stop when signaled and comply with directions given to them by Coast Guard boarding officers. However, boaters who fail to stop or who are operating their vessels while impaired by alcohol place themselves, their passengers, the public and the Coast Guard at great risk. Alcohol use is ranked as one of the top ten contributing factors in all boating accidents."

The case was investigated by the Coast Guard Investigative Service Central Region and prosecuted by Special Assistant U. S. Attorney Larry Kennedy