



Department of Justice

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OPERATION CRYSTAL CLEAR RESULTS IN CHARGES AGAINST 24 DEFENDANTS AS PART OF INVESTIGATION INTO DRUG TRAFFICKING IN WALDO AND MAGNOLIA, ARKANSAS, AND TEXAS

Magnolia, Arkansas - Conner Eldridge, United States Attorney for the Western District of Arkansas; Randall Coleman, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI; and Ian Vickery, Prosecuting Attorney for the Thirteenth Judicial District of Arkansas, announced today that 24 individuals have been charged with state and federal crimes involving large scale drug trafficking of methamphetamine in Waldo and Magnolia, Arkansas, and surrounding areas. The investigation, known as Operation Crystal Clear, resulted in 16 arrests today by local, state, and federal law enforcement as part of a roundup of the charged defendants. The drug trafficking activity involved a large area of Southwest Arkansas and reaches into Texas, including Texarkana and Dallas.

In addition to the arrests, five search warrants were executed in Waldo, Magnolia, Dallas, Texas, and Desoto, Texas. According to allegations in the indictment and information in other documents filed in court, the investigation has been on-going since early 2012. The investigation included controlled purchases of methamphetamine, surveillance and monitoring, and other investigative techniques. During the course of the investigation, over three pounds of methamphetamine, five firearms, and approximately \$150,000 in cash were seized. As alleged in the indictment, the organization was involved in distributing pound quantities of methamphetamine in Southwest Arkansas and Texas.

United States Attorney Eldridge commented, "Working together, we remain focused on identifying, investigating, and prosecuting drug-trafficking organizations in South Arkansas and throughout the Western District. Those who bring this illegal activity onto our streets threaten our communities. We will continue to work to ensure that those who choose to traffic in drugs and participate in associated illegal activity are held accountable so that Arkansans can have confidence that our streets are safe. I thank the dedicated members of local, state, and federal law enforcement who have worked together tirelessly in this effort."

“Today’s Operation Crystal Clear is an example of what a strong group of dedicated partners in law enforcement can accomplish when working together to combat violent crime in our local Arkansas communities,” stated FBI Special Agent in Charge Randall Coleman. “Working together on our Safe Streets Task Force, we will continue to disrupt and dismantle those groups who choose to conduct their illegal drug and firearms trafficking activities here.”

Prosecuting Attorney Ian Vickery said, “We all know that the damage from drugs is suffered locally by our families and communities, but the business of drug trafficking is national, if not international; so this 13th Judicial District is especially grateful for the multistate leadership and support provided this district by the FBI, the Department of Justice and U.S. Attorney Conner Eldridge in our fight against drug crimes.”

Deputy Prosecuting Attorney David Butler added, “The 13th Judicial District Prosecuting Attorney’s Office is proud of the state and federal agencies who have worked together to arrest several upper-level methamphetamine dealers. This operation will put a big dent in the amount of methamphetamine being distributed into Camden, Magnolia, and El Dorado. Operation Crystal Clear is a result of the collaboration between the U.S. Attorney’s office and the Columbia County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office in prosecuting this case.”

The federal defendants arrested will appear before U.S. Magistrate Judge Barry Bryant in federal court in El Dorado. The state defendants arrested will appear before Judge Larry Chandler in Columbia County Circuit Court in Magnolia.

The federal defendants arrested today in the case are as follows: Curtis Cole, age 45 of Waldo; Courtney Loudermill, age 34 of Waldo; Jamie Martin, age 33 of Waldo; Claudie Miller Jr., age 40 of Dallas, TX; Lee Williams, age 40 of Magnolia; and Eric Wyrick, age 34 of Texarkana, TX. Four federal defendants remain fugitives. The defendants face a penalty of up to 20 years in prison for the distribution of methamphetamine. The most serious charges for distribution of more than 50 grams of methamphetamine and for conspiracy to distribute more than 280 grams of crack cocaine have maximum penalties of life in prison.

The state defendants arrested today in this case are as follows: Steven Atkinson, of Waldo; Johnny Carter, of Magnolia; Brandon Chambliss, age 33 of Magnolia; Samuel Cogbill, age 29 of Waldo; Michael Hunter, age 36 of Waldo; Mario Meadows, age 23 of Magnolia; Sammy Otwell, of Magnolia; Ricardo Walker, age 21 of Waldo; Jarrod Wilson, of Magnolia; and John Woodward. Four state defendants remain fugitives.

Operation Crystal Clear is a joint operation between the Little Rock FBI Division and El Dorado RA Safe Streets Task Force, which consists of the El Dorado Police Department, Union County Sheriff’s Department, Magnolia Police Department, Columbia County Sheriff’s Department, Camden Police Department, Ouachita County Sheriff’s Office, Crossett Police Department, Arkansas State Police, and Southern Arkansas University Police Department. Other agencies assisting with the operation include: the U.S. Marshal’s Service, Lafayette County Sheriff’s Office, FBI Texarkana Texas RA, Dallas FBI Division, and the Bi-State Narcotics Task Force which consists of Texarkana, Arkansas and Texas Police Departments and the Miller

County Sheriff's Department. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Matthew Quinn and Jonathan Ross are prosecuting the case for the Western District of Arkansas.

An indictment is merely an accusation. An arrest warrant represents a finding of probable cause. A person is presumed innocent unless or until he or she is proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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