

Thirty Northwest Missouri Residents Indicted on Drug Charges

Beth Phillips, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced today that 30 defendants have been indicted by a federal grand jury for their roles in a conspiracy to distribute more than \$1 million worth of methamphetamine in northwest Missouri.

Thirty defendants, primarily from Northwest Missouri, were charged in a five-count superseding indictment that was returned under seal by a federal grand jury in Kansas City, Mo., on Wednesday, March 14, 2012. That indictment was unsealed and made public today upon the arrests and initial court appearances of 12 of the defendants.

Thirteen of the defendants are residents of St. Joseph, Mo.: Russell William Anderson, 50, Tamara Beth Angel, 33, Brandy Leighann Bennett, 33, Bradley Shawn Blacketer, 34, Chad Ryan Brant, 29, Brett Alan Devooght, 46, Audrey J. Lingle, 32, James Brian Sipes, 32, Deacon Tony Juanita Suritte, 36, Jonathan Michael Cornell, 31, Katie Nicole Sansone-Utterback, 24, Samantha Ann Worley, 20, and Caleb Loren Velvick, 29. This superseding indictment replaces an earlier indictment in which Blacketer was the sole defendant.

Twelve of the defendants are also residents of northwest Missouri: Brian Dean Kever, 41, Holly Lynn Nicholson, 41, and Rusty Ray Turner, 39, all of Skidmore, Mo.; Sabina Lea Corbin, 43, Diane Marie Cureton, 55, Jesse Jo Lee Stinnett, 31, and his brother, Joshua Dean Stinnett, 35, all of Maitland, Mo.; Michael Delmar McCalister, 45, Kenneth Joseph Wheeler, 40, and Robert S. Miller, 46, all of Craig, Mo.; Michelle Sue Hendrix, 42, of Country Club, Mo.; and Matthew Henry Grover, 38, of Mound City, Mo.

The federal indictment alleges that all of the defendants participated in a conspiracy to distribute at least 15 kilograms of methamphetamine from Jan. 1, 2009, to March 14, 2012.

The indictment also alleges that all of the defendants participated in a money-laundering conspiracy during that time by conducting financial transactions that involved the unlawful proceeds of the drug-trafficking conspiracy. According to the indictment, the methamphetamine distributed during the conspiracy has a street price of at least \$2,000 per ounce, for a total street value of \$1,070,000.

During the conspiracy, law enforcement officers conducted at least 10 controlled methamphetamine purchases with at least eight different defendants. During this time, at least 11 arrests or searches of defendants or co-conspirators occurred where methamphetamine was recovered. On at least six occasions, defendants were found in possession of hundreds or thousands of dollars in cash, although they had no known legitimate income.

Allegedly firearms, lawn and yard equipment, vehicles, trailers, construction equipment, electronic equipment, and ATV's were accepted as payment for drugs "fronted" or in trade for drugs.

The federal indictment also contains a forfeiture allegation, which would require the defendants to forfeit to the government \$1,070,000, which was allegedly received in exchange for the unlawful distribution of methamphetamine. According to the indictment, that money judgment is based on the distribution of 15 kilograms or more of methamphetamine with an estimated street price of \$2,000 per ounce.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bruce Rhoades. It was investigated by the Buchanan County Drug Strike Force, the Sheriff's Departments of Buchanan, Holt and Nodaway Counties, the St. Joseph, Mo., Police Department, the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the Drug Enforcement Administration.