



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

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“Operation Highway Men” Update:

46th Defendant Convicted on Federal Charges; Life Sentence Given Today to Drug Distributor

(Alexandria, Virginia) - Kareem Saunders, age 30, of Alexandria, Virginia, was convicted by a jury yesterday of conspiracy to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine and 50 grams or more of crack cocaine, and two counts of possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. Saunders was a supplier in an organization responsible for distributing multiple kilograms of cocaine and crack cocaine into Northern Virginia. Saunders, a twice convicted drug felon, will face a life sentence at his April sentencing. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, also announced that Wesley Wood, age 27, of Prince William County, Virginia, was sentenced today to life in federal prison by United States District Judge James C. Cacheris for his role in the same drug trafficking organization. Wood was responsible for distributing cocaine and crack cocaine from two homes in Prince William County.

Both defendants were arrested as part of “Operation Highway Men,” an ATF-led Task Force investigation targeting gun and drug traffickers in the eastern area of Prince William County, including the towns of Woodbridge, Dale City, Lake Ridge, Dumfries, and Occoquan. This nearly two year community impact investigation resulted in the July 2006 arrests of more than 60 individuals on federal and state charges involving firearms-related violence, armed narcotics trafficking, and the straw-purchase of firearms. To date, 46 defendants have been convicted of drug trafficking and firearms offenses in United States District Court for Eastern District of Virginia. Of the 46 convictions, 36 defendants have already been sentenced to over 300 years in prison, with an average sentence of over 100 months. 16 of those 36 defendants received sentences in excess of 10 years, including the life sentence given to Wood today.

United States Attorney Rosenberg stated, “We launched this initiative to get bad guys off our streets. With this recent conviction and life sentence, and the other 44 federal convictions since July, we are doing just that.”

A total of 37 firearms were seized, some of which were stolen; and law enforcement seized significant quantities of cocaine, crack cocaine, PCP, marijuana, Dilaudid (synthetic heroin) pills, Oxycontin pills, ecstasy pills, as well as thousands of dollars in cash.

“I am proud of the work that the men and women of ATF and our Prince William partners did during this long-term investigation,” said ATF Special Agent in Charge William J. Hoover. “Their commitment to protecting our citizens from violent criminals resulted in over forty criminals facing significant prison sentences, and forty less people on the street to victimize the citizens of Prince William County.”

“This investigation was an excellent example of law enforcement cooperation in action, and demonstrates the incredible results we can achieve by working side-by-side,” said Prince William County, Virginia, Police Chief Charlie T. Deane.

The “Highway Men” investigation was conducted by the ATF, the Prince William County, Manassas City, and Manassas Park Police Departments, Virginia State Police, Drug Enforcement Administration, United States Marshals Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Northern Virginia HIDTA Task Force. Cases resulting from the “Highway Men” investigation have been prosecuted the United States Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Virginia, and the Office of the Commonwealth’s Attorney for Prince William County. Assistant United States Attorneys Jonathan Fahey and Daniel Grooms, and Special Assistant United States Attorneys Fitzpatrick, Paul Ahern, Brian Samuels, and Meredith Mills prosecuted the cases for the United States. Special Assistant Dennis Fitzpatrick prosecuted the Saunders case for the United States.

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