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13 New Arrests in ATF Led "Operation Highway Men" Investigation:
*More than 75 Defendants Charged in Past Year on
Federal and State Drug and Weapons Charges*

(Alexandria, Virginia) - Thirteen defendants have been charged over the past week and appeared in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia on federal drug and firearms trafficking charges. These recent arrests are 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. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Edgar A. Domenech, Special Agent in Charge, ATF Washington Field Office; and Charlie T. Deane, Chief, Prince William County Police Department made the announcement.

Ten of the 13 defendants were detained this week pending trial in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. One defendant remains in state custody and two others have been released on court-imposed conditions pending trial. Trial dates for the 13 defendants have not been set. Last week, federal search warrants were executed in connection with these indictments at six locations. Police seized over 250 grams of crack cocaine, firearms, drug paraphernalia, and three automobiles used for drug trafficking. The federal defendants all face up to life in prison, with mandatory minimums of 10 years in prison.

These latest indictments follow the indictment of an additional defendant charged with conspiracy to distribute over five kilograms of cocaine as well as using a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking offense related to a May 2006 shooting in Prince William County, Virginia.

United States Attorney Rosenberg stated, "We promised the citizens of Prince William County that we would get the job done. I hope they see that we have kept our word."

This nearly two-year community impact investigation has resulted in more than 75 defendants having been charged in federal and state court on drug trafficking and/or firearms charges. To date, 48 defendants have been convicted in the United States District Court for Eastern District of Virginia. Of the 48 convictions, 38 defendants have already been sentenced to over 300 years in prison, with an average sentence of over 100 months. Eighteen of those 38 defendants received sentences in excess of 10 years, including one life sentence. In addition, 19 individuals have been charged on state narcotics or firearms charges associated with this investigation, eight of which have been convicted.

ATF Special Agent in Charge Edgar A. Domenech said, “We told people last July that we were not leaving Prince William County. These new arrests and indictments reinforce the fact that ATF remains committed to fighting violent crime and making our communities safer for law abiding citizens and our children.”

During the course of the investigation, a total of 39 firearms have been seized, some of which were stolen, and law enforcement has seized quantities of crack cocaine, powder cocaine, marijuana, Dilaudid (synthetic heroin) pills, OxyContin pills, Ecstasy pills and percocete pills, as well as thousands of dollars in cash and several automobiles used in drug trafficking.

“The ongoing commitment of all of the law enforcement agencies involved in this investigation is to be commended,” said Prince William County, Virginia, Police Chief Charlie T. Deane. “The level of cooperation has been outstanding.”

This latest round of the “Highway Men” investigation was conducted by the ATF, the Prince William County, Manassas City, and Manassas Park Police Departments, Virginia State Police, and the United States Marshals Service. Cases resulting from the “Highway Men” investigation have been prosecuted by 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 Dennis Fitzpatrick, Paul Ahern, Brian Samuels, and Meredith Mills have prosecuted the cases for the United States.

Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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