

NEWS RELEASE

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CHARLESTON, MO., MAN FOUND GUILTY OF POSSESSION OF OVER 50 GRAMS OF CRACK COCAINE WITH THE INTENT TO DISTRIBUTE, ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREARMS, AND POSSESSION AND PRODUCTION OF CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

May 31, 2007

A Charleston man was found guilty by a jury of one count of possessing over 50 grams of crack cocaine with the intent to distribute, two counts of being a felon in possession of a firearm, two counts of possession of a firearm during a drug trafficking crime, one count of possession of child pornography and one count of production of child pornography, announced United States Attorney Catherine L. Hanaway.

TRON KENT, age 27, of Charleston, Missouri was found guilty of those offenses at the conclusion of his jury trial. The three-day trial was held before United States District Judge Jean C. Hamilton.

Kent now faces a mandatory punishment of life imprisonment for the charge of possessing more than 50 grams of crack cocaine with the intent to distribute, a five-year consecutive sentence for possessing a firearm in furtherance of that offense, and a twenty-five year sentence consecutive to both of those sentences for another possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. Kent also faces sentences of a maximum of 10 years in prison and/or a \$250,000 fine as to each count of being a felon in possession of a firearm and the count of possession of child pornography. The punishment for the production of child pornography is a mandatory sentence of fifteen years, with a maximum of thirty years. Sentencing has been set for August 13, 2007.

Hanaway praised the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Secret Service, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the Charleston Police Department, and the Sikeston Department of Public Safety for their work on the case. Assistant United States Attorneys Larry H. Ferrell and Keith D. Sorrell handled the prosecution for the government.

As revealed by the evidence presented at trial, Tron Kent was stopped by two Sikeston police officers on January 20, 2004, while he was walking on Westgate Street. The officers had received a report of a man fitting Kent's description who was walking on Westgate Street who had a stolen handgun. The officers patted Kent down and discovered that he was carrying a Jennings, .380 caliber pistol in his coat pocket. The pistol was fully loaded with a round in the chamber. The pistol was also found to have its safety broken off so that it was always in the "fire" position. They also found ten baggies of crack cocaine in another pocket. Kent admitted that he was trying to sell the crack cocaine to other persons. At this time, Kent was a previously convicted felon, having been convicted in Mississippi County of the felony of possession of crack cocaine with the intent to distribute. Kent was prosecuted in the Scott County Circuit Court for the crack cocaine possession.

The United States Attorneys Office prosecuted Kent for being a felon in possession of a firearm and for possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

On May 8, 2006, the Charleston police department was looking for Tron Kent to arrest him on an outstanding state arrest warrant. A Charleston officer stopped a car that Kent was driving and arrested him. A cell phone that Kent had in his possession was secured as Kent's property as part of that arrest.

The officers noted that the vehicle that Kent was driving was not registered to him. They went to the home of the vehicle owner and discovered that Kent had been staying in a bedroom in that house. Kent's room in that home was searched. During that search, the officers found and seized approximately 70 grams of crack cocaine, \$540 in cash, and a High Standard, .22 caliber revolver that was fully loaded.

Kent was interviewed about the firearm and the drugs. Kent stated that he had never been in that bedroom. The officers went back and seized items from that room for DNA testing. A Missouri State Highway Patrol DNA Chemist testified that Tron Kent's DNA was consistent with the DNA found on items from the bedroom and on one of the baggies that held the crack cocaine. The DNA test revealed that Kent's DNA would be expected to occur 1 time in a total population of 16.6 quadrillion persons in the black population.

The cell phone that Kent had in his vehicle was also examined. It contained sexually explicit photographs of a minor child and Kent.

The federal grand jury sitting in Cape Girardeau indicted Tron Kent on two counts of being a felon in possession of a firearm, two counts of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, one count of possession of over 50 grams of cocaine base with the intent to

distribute, one count of possession of child pornography and one count of production of child pornography.

After deliberating the evidence for two and one half hours, the jury returned a verdict of guilty on all seven felony counts.

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