



Department of Justice

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\$17 MILLION METHAMPHETAMINE CONSPIRACY INDICTED

45 Individuals Named in 98-Count Methamphetamine Indictment

CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE—Today law enforcement officers from local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies from Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia began apprehending defendants charged yesterday by a federal grand jury sitting in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in a 98-count indictment. Charges against 45 defendants include a conspiracy to manufacture and distribute over 375 pounds of methamphetamine worth in excess of \$17 million, a conspiracy to possess and distribute precursor chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine, and related narcotics crimes and firearms offenses occurring from July 2005 through July 2007. Individuals arrested today include:

DONALD HENSON, 38, of Bridgeport, Alabama,
JOE S. BLEVINS, 46, of South Pittsburg, Tennessee,
JAMES PATRICK BRYANT, 41, of Soddy Daisy, Tennessee,
STACY CANTRELL, 32, of Ringgold, Georgia,
NATHAN CARLTON, 33, Ft. Wayne, Alabama,
JACKIE HARRIS, 38, of Stevenson, Alabama,
STEPHEN HENSHAW, 26, of Bryant, Alabama,
MATTHEW KENNEMORE, 30, of South Pittsburg, Tennessee,
RANDY KILGORE, 31, of Whitwell, Tennessee;
PAUL McCULLOUGH, 38, of South Pittsburg, Tennessee,
JAMES McDANIEL, 41, of Chattanooga, Tennessee,
RICKEY MELHORN, 49, of Chattanooga, Tennessee,
THOMAS MORROW, 32, of Alabama,
WALTER NORMAN, 22, of South Pittsburg, Tennessee,
JAMES SHADRICK, 45, of Marion County, Tennessee,
CHARLES SISK, 34, of Jasper, Tennessee,
GEERLEN STEELE, 54, of Stevenson, Alabama,
WYLIE REAGAN STEELE, 60, of Stevenson, Alabama,
ANDREW SUMMERS, 66, of Stevenson, Alabama,
RANDY WILSON, JR., 26, of Bridgeport, Alabama,
TREMIS WOODLEY, 31, of Huntsville, Alabama, and
TAMMY YOUNG, 43, of Guild, Tennessee.

United States Attorney Russ Dedrick praised the spirit of cooperation evidenced between multiple law enforcement agencies involved in the investigation and credited their professionalism for bringing the indictment in this case. Dedrick stated: "The fight against methamphetamine is an on-going battle, aided by the dedicated efforts of organizations such as the Tennessee Methamphetamine Task Force, which is supported by the Tennessee National Guard. The Meth Task Force provides training and equipment to local and state law enforcement officers so that they may successfully and safely investigate and dismantle dangerous clandestine labs utilized in the production of methamphetamine. This investigation is one example of how law enforcement agencies are joining together to wipe out the methamphetamine problem in our communities. The Drug Enforcement Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives are to be commended for their hard work and aggressive investigative efforts with our local agencies in these cases."

Culminating from a two-year multi-jurisdictional investigation, 45 individuals were indicted under federal narcotics trafficking laws. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC) assigned to the DEA, and, led the investigation, which also involved law enforcement officials from the DEA High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Task Force (comprised of the Tennessee Alcoholic Beverage Commission (TABC), the Hamilton County Sheriff's Department, the Chattanooga Police Department, and Tennessee Bureau of Investigation); the Georgia Bureau of Investigation; the Catoosa County, Georgia Sheriff's Office; the Grundy County, Tennessee Sheriff's Office; the Jackson County, Alabama Sheriff's Office; the Marion County, Tennessee Sheriff's Office; the Bridgeport, Alabama Police Department; the Stevenson, Alabama Police Department; the Tennessee Methamphetamine Task Force; the 12th Judicial District Drug Task Force; the 14th Judicial District Drug Task Force; the Lookout Mountain Judicial Drug Task Force; and the U.S. Marshal's Service.

The investigation tracked hundreds of illicit purchases involving more than 80 pounds of pseudoephedrine, an essential precursor chemical in the manufacture of methamphetamine, utilizing a database maintained by the Tennessee Methamphetamine Task Force, which records pseudoephedrine purchases state-wide. Other precursor chemicals included more than 78 pounds of iodine, more than 100 pounds of red phosphorous, and more than 37 gallons of liquid red phosphorous. Based upon the amount of precursor chemicals obtained, methamphetamine and chemicals recovered, and other evidence, law enforcement agents established that well in excess of 376 pounds of finished methamphetamine were produced by the organization over the course of the conspiracy. In terms of individual dosage units of approximately 0.1 gram, this quantity would be sufficient to supply approximately 1.7 million people with methamphetamine.

The indictment alleged that Donald Henson of Bridgeport, Alabama, led an organization that was committed to manufacturing and distributing large quantities of methamphetamine. The organization utilized numerous individuals in a "smurfing" operation in which co-conspirators traveled throughout the southeastern United States, including locations in east Tennessee, in order to procure equipment, chemicals, products and materials used to manufacture methamphetamine. This method allowed Henson and others to obtain large quantities of chemicals while avoided law enforcement detection and skirting state and federal precursor chemical purchasing laws. Once these chemicals and materials were obtained, Henson either cooked the methamphetamine himself or contracted out with others to do so. In addition, Henson

supplied and directed the large-scale distribution of methamphetamine in southeast Tennessee, north Georgia, and north Alabama, by employing numerous individuals to distribute the methamphetamine.

The Henson organization also made arrangements with specific businesses, including five Discount Express Stores in Huntsville, Alabama; the Rash Grocery and Deli in Jackson County, Alabama, owned and operated by Andrew Summers; Bolivar's This and That Store in Jackson County, Alabama, owned and operated by Geerlen and Wylie Reagan Steele; and Randy's Liquidations Store in Stevenson, Alabama, owned and operated by Randy Noles; to make large purchases of pseudoephedrine, iodine, and red phosphorus. These businesses took steps to sell chemicals and equipment off the books or utilized other strategies to avoid raising the suspicions of law enforcement and to avoid state and federal precursor chemicals purchasing laws. The indictment also seeks to forfeit over 17 million dollars, the amount of income generated from the illegal activities.

"Today's team enforcement effort is a great victory in the battle against drug trafficking and the crime that accompanies it," stated ATF Special Agent in Charge James Cavanaugh of the Nashville Field Division. "ATF and its law enforcement partners will continue to strive to rid communities of those people who insist on a livelihood of selling drugs and illegally possessing firearms."

Rodney G. Benson, Special Agent in Charge of the DEA Atlanta Field Division reported, "Today we are happy to announce that we delivered a devastating blow to a well-organized methamphetamine trafficking organization. The members of this organization, like all other drug traffickers, have no conscience, in that they could care less about poisoning the community. Because of the very dedicated efforts of our local, state, and federal partners, many communities are much safer today."

To learn more about methamphetamine, please visit the Tennessee Methamphetamine Task Force website, www.rid-meth.org, or contact them at 1-877-TNN-Meth (1-877-866-6384). Members of the public are reminded that indictments contain only charges. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

For further information please contact James R. Dedrick, United States Attorney or Steven S. Neff, Assistant United States Attorney.