

NEWS RELEASE

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CHARLESTON MAN SENTENCED TO FOUR LIFE SENTENCES PLUS 50 YEARS FOR DRUG, WEAPONS, AND CHILD EXPLOITATION CHARGES

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A Charleston, Missouri man was sentenced yesterday on charges of unlawful possession of firearms, drug trafficking, and possessing and producing child pornography, announced United States Attorney Catherine L. Hanaway.

TRON KENT, a/k/a TRONE KENT, age 27, was sentenced to four life sentences plus 50 years in Federal Court yesterday. He appeared before United States District Judge Jean C. Hamilton, who imposed the maximum possible sentence under the law. Kent was convicted on May 30, 2007 on seven felony counts following a jury trial in the United States District Court in Cape Girardeau. Judge Hamilton sentenced Kent to terms of life imprisonment for one count of

possession with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of “crack” cocaine; one count of being a previously convicted felon in possession of a firearm; and two counts of possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime. Three of these sentences were ordered to run consecutively to one another. Kent also received a sentence of 360 months for the production of child pornography and sentences of 120 months imprisonment on an additional count of being a previously convicted felon in possession of a firearm and 120 months imprisonment on one count of possession of child pornography.

On January 20, 2004, officers with the Sikeston, Missouri Department of Public Safety received a report of a suspicious person armed with a handgun walking on Westgate Street. Officers Joey Henry and Rick Rapert arrived at that location where they encountered Tron Kent. Kent had both hands in his pockets. The officers told Kent that they were going to pat him down for possible weapons, and Kent stepped toward the patrol car and placed his hands on the hood. Suddenly, he stood up, put his hands back in his pockets and started to walk away. Officer Rapert pulled his service revolver and ordered Kent back to the car. Officer Henry patted Kent down and found a .38 caliber pistol in his right front coat pocket. The pistol was loaded with seven rounds of ammunition with one round in the chamber and the safety off. Officers also recovered two baggies of “crack” cocaine in Kent’s coat pocket. As a result of this evidence, Kent was convicted of being a previously convicted felon in possession of a firearm and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

On May 8, 2006, officers for the Charleston, Missouri Department of Public Safety were seeking to arrest Kent for state charges of unlawful use of a weapon, second degree assault, and armed criminal action. Shortly before midnight officers observed Kent driving an automobile on Grand Street in Charleston. Kent was placed under arrest and his cell phone was taken. Subsequent

to his arrest, officers searched a residence in Charleston, Missouri, where Kent had been living. From a bedroom in the residence, officers recovered 72.4 grams of cocaine base, \$540 in currency, and a .22 caliber revolver loaded with nine rounds of ammunition. Kent denied ever being in the bedroom of the residence, however, a DNA analysis of cigarette butts, bed clothing, and other items removed from the bedroom matched Kent's. Ruth Montgomery, a Criminalist for the Missouri State Highway Patrol's DNA Unit, testified that Kent's genetic markers matched those found on the recovered items and that these specific genetic markers would be expected to be encountered in approximately one in sixteen quadrillion (16,000,000,000,000,000) individuals. DNA found on the plastic baggie containing the cocaine base was also consistent with Kent's. Kent was convicted of possessing more than 50 grams of "crack" cocaine, felon in possession of a firearm, and possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

While Kent was in custody, officers conducted an examination of his cell phone and discovered the cell phone contained images of child pornography that Kent himself had produced, which led to Kent's convictions for possessing and producing child pornography.

At the time of his arrest, Kent was on parole from the Missouri Department of Corrections on three separate convictions for possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute in Mississippi County, Missouri. Judge Hamilton ordered that the federal sentences should run consecutively to the sentences imposed in Kent's state cases.

"Mr. Kent earned every minute of his sentence. Not only did he traffic in drugs and arm himself, but worst of all, he was producing child pornography. Keith Sorrell and Larry Ferrell did a great job of making sure this very bad guy will never see the light of day," said Hanaway.

Hanaway praised the Drug Enforcement Administration, the United States Secret Service, the Charleston, Missouri Department of Public Safety, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, and the

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives for their work on the case. Assistant United States Attorneys Keith D. Sorrell and Larry H. Ferrell handled the prosecution for the Government.