

**US ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**



**SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA**

**Charles T. Miller, US Attorney**

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# **NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **CLAY COUNTY RESIDENT SENTENCED TO OVER 21 YEARS IN PRISON FOR HIS ROLE IN ATTEMPTING TO BOMB THE COUNTY SHERIFF**

Charleston, WV – United States Attorney Charles T. Miller announced that **DONNIE WELCH, 26, of Clay, WV**, was sentenced today by United States District Judge John T. Copenhaver, Jr. to 262 months in prison for various charges stemming from his involvement in an attempt to bomb the Sheriff of Clay County, and an unrelated firearm charge.

“This sentence should send a strong message to violent criminals thinking about harming police officers. Simply put, we will not tolerate it,” Miller stated. “As the superb ATF agents proved in this case, we will aggressively investigate and prosecute these actions and use every resource and avenue available to ensure that justice is served.”

WELCH previously pled guilty this past July, admitting he and Samuel Todd Murphy, aided and abetted by each other, possessed a bomb intended to kill the Sheriff of Clay County. WELCH also plead guilty to making false statements to a Special Agent with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives investigating the attempted bombing of the Sheriff, and to possessing a firearm while using methamphetamine. Additionally, WELCH entered a guilty plea to perjury, admitting he falsely testified under oath before a federal grand jury in an effort to hide the fact that he and Murphy had conspired to blow up the Sheriff to avoid prosecution.

In an effort to impede the Sheriff of Clay County from aggressively prosecuting methamphetamine cases, WELCH and Murphy attempted to kill the Sheriff. The duo planned to

place a bomb in a pre-determined location and then lure the Sheriff to the bomb site. WELCH and Murphy travelled to a telephone booth where Murphy made an anonymous call to the Sheriff falsely reporting a methamphetamine lab at the location where the bomb was place. On Sunday, August 7, 2005, before the Sheriff received the message, two men looking for items to recycle found the bomb hidden in a box and set to explode by a pressure switch when opened. The men opened the box and the bomb/device exploded. Other components found at the location, including pipe bombs, were detonated by the West Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office.

WELCH was also sentenced for possessing a loaded Smith and Wesson pistol on October 22, 2005, following an automobile accident. At the time he possessed the firearm, WELCH had consumed methamphetamine and marijuana.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives conducted the investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Monica K. Schwartz handled the prosecution.

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