



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Anne M. Tompkins Western District of North Carolina

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
THURSDAY, MAY 30, 2013
<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/ncw>

CONTACT: Lia Bantavani
704-338-3140
Lia.Bantavani@usdoj.gov

NINETEEN MEMBERS OF METHAMPHETAMINE TRAFFICKING RING FACE DRUG CHARGES

BRYSON CITY, N.C. – Nineteen members of a methamphetamine trafficking ring have been charged with conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine. Thirteen of those charged were arrested on Wednesday, May 29, 2013, during an early morning round-up conducted by federal, state and local law enforcement, announced Anne M. Tompkins, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina.

U.S. Attorney Tompkins is joined in making today's announcement by Harry S. Sommers, Special Agent in Charge of the Atlanta Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which oversees the Charlotte District Office and Wayne L. Dixie, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Charlotte Field Division.

The arrests are the result of a multi-agency investigation conducted by DEA, ATF, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, Macon County Sheriff's Office, Jackson County Sheriff's Office, Swain County Sheriff's Office, Franklin Police Department, and Cherokee Indian Police Department to target and reduce the trafficking of methamphetamine in Western North Carolina.

In making today's announcement, U.S. Attorney Tompkins stated, "Methamphetamine is harmful not only to those who create or use it but also to those who are exposed to it, often including young children. Together with our law enforcement partners we will continue our relentless pursuit of meth trafficking rings that operate in our communities, plague our neighborhoods and imperil our children."

Harry S. Sommers, the Special Agent in Charge of the DEA Atlanta Field Division commented on the case, "The successful results of this investigation should let criminals who flood the drug market with methamphetamine know that DEA and its multi-level law enforcement partners will disrupt, dismantle and ultimately destroy their drug distribution networks."

“Drug dealers are poison enough to our communities, but when you include a drug dealer who also deals in guns that have the high potential of being used in violent crimes, it becomes a top priority of ATF to stop them and hold them accountable for their criminal conduct.” said ATF Special Agent in Charge Wayne L. Dixie. “Anyone who deals in the illegal transfer of firearms and manufacture and distribution of illegal drugs can be assured that the full wrath and resources of the federal government will be used to remove them from our neighborhoods.”

According to allegations contained in the criminal indictment unsealed today in U.S. District Court, from in or about May of 2012 to in or about April of 2013, the nineteen defendants did knowingly conspire to possess with intent to distribute more than 50 grams of actual methamphetamine or more than 500 grams of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of methamphetamine, which has a street value of \$100. The indictment alleges that the defendants carried out their drug conspiracy primarily in Jackson, Haywood, Macon, Swain and Buncombe counties in Western North Carolina.

The following individuals were named and charged in the methamphetamine conspiracy indictment.

- Cipriano Ramos Altamirano, 25, of Franklin, N.C. (arrested)
- Claude Gregory Coggins, 50, of Cullowhee, N.C. (arrested)
- Anne Harvey Cresswell, 42, of Franklin. (arrested)
- Joseph Daniel Denmark, 32, of Franklin. (arrest pending)
- Patricia Leigh Dreml, 48, of Bryson City, N.C. (arrested)
- Daniel Furman Gibson, 50, of Franklin. (arrested)
- Gerardo Beltran Llanas, 43, of Franklin. (arrested)
- Carlos Lopez, 28, of Canton, N.C. (arrest pending)
- Forest Shane Lynn, 42, of Robinsville, N.C. (arrested)
- Joshua Bryan Parker, 29, of Franklin. (arrested)
- Eddie Dwayne Potts, 42, of Cullowhee. (arrest pending)
- Gerardo Rodriguez-Aragon, 30, of Franklin. (arrested)
- Javier Serna-Trejo, 30, of Clayton, Ga. (arrested)
- Chad Keith Shuler, 36, of Franklin. (arrest pending)
- Paul Michael Swofford, 46, of Franklin. (arrest pending)
- Ronald Edward Swofford, 39, of Franklin. (arrested)
- James Homer Taylor, 52, of Franklin. (arrested)
- Heather Marie West, 24, of Canton. (arrest pending)
- Angela Leigh Wike, 39, of Bryson City. (arrested)

A separate indictment also unsealed today in U.S. District Court charged Taylor and David Carlton Martin, 57, of Franklin, with one count of dealing in firearms without a license. Martin was also arrested during the early morning round-up yesterday.

All 19 defendants in the methamphetamine trafficking ring have been charged with engaging in a narcotics conspiracy and they face a statutory minimum prison term of ten years

and a maximum term of life imprisonment, and a \$10 million fine. (See chart below for a breakdown of additional federal charges and maximum penalties for each defendant). Taylor and Martin face a maximum prison term of five years and a \$250,000 fine for the firearms charge.

The 13 defendants arrested on May 29, 2013 will have their initial appearances this afternoon in U.S. District Court before U.S. Magistrate Judge Dennis L. Howell.

The charges contained in the indictment are allegations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond reasonable doubt in a court of law.

The investigation is being handled by the DEA and ATF, assisted by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, Macon County Sheriff's Office, Jackson County Sheriff's Office, Swain County Sheriff's Office, Franklin Police Department, and Cherokee Indian Police Department. The prosecution is being handled for the government by Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas Kent of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Asheville.

###

CASE NO.	DEFENDANT	COUNTS	CHARGE	STATUTORY PENALTIES
2:13cr9	Cipriano Ramos Altamirano a/k/a Guerro	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
		11	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
		12	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
		13	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
	Claude Gregory Coggins a/k/a Greg	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
		2	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
		18, 25	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
		20	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
		29	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
	Anne Harvey Creswell	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
		9	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
		24	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
	Joseph Daniel Denmark	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison,

			maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	3	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
	4	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
	5	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Patricia Leigh Dreml	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	14	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
	30	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Daniel Furman Gibson	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	21, 22	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Gerardo Beltran Llanas a/k/a Jerry	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	9	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
	10	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
Carlos Lopez	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	4	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Forest Shane Lynn	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	28	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Joshua Bryan Parker	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	16	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
Eddie Dwayne Potts	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	3	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
	4	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000

		Controlled Substance	
	6	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Gerardo Rodriguez-Aragon a/k/a Lalo	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	13	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Javier Serna-Trejo a/k/a Gorilla a/k/a Harvey	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	19	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
	21, 22, 23	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Chad Keith Shuler	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	9	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000
	15	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Paul Michael Swofford	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	4	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
	7	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
	8	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Ronald Edward Swofford	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	8	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
James Homer Taylor a/k/a Jimmy	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	23	Possession with Intent to Distribute and Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
	26	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
	27	Distribution of a Controlled Substance	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000
Heather Marie West	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	4	Possession with Intent to Distribute a	0 to 20 years in prison, maximum fine of \$1,000,000

		Controlled Substance	
Angela Leigh Wike	1	Narcotics Conspiracy	10 years to life in prison, maximum fine of \$10,000,000
	14, 17	Possession with Intent to Distribute a Controlled Substance	5 to 40 years in prison, maximum fine of \$5,000,000