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News Release

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Ringleader of methamphetamine distribution operation sentenced

The ringleader of a methamphetamine distribution organization that operated in northern Minnesota was sentenced this week in federal court.

On Dec. 17 in Minneapolis, United States District Court Judge Joan Ericksen sentenced Erik Lee Rekonen, 28, Virginia, to 292 months in prison and five years supervised release on one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine. Rekonen was indicted on April 11, 2007, and pleaded guilty on Jan. 17.

According to Rekonen's plea agreement, he admitted that from 2004 through October 2007 he conspired with others to distribute and possess with intent to distribute multiple kilograms of methamphetamine.

Several other defendants connected to the operation have already pleaded guilty and have been sentenced each on one count of conspiracy. John Francis Hasty, 33, Mountain Iron, was sentenced on Dec. 12 to 118 months in prison and five years supervised release. Travis John Hanson, 28, Minneapolis, was sentenced on Aug. 26 to 60 months in prison and five years supervised release.

Nicholas Michael Mancini, 25, Duluth, was sentenced on Aug. 4 to 120 months in prison and five years supervised release. Corey Lee Nelson-Hughes, 23, Duluth, was sentenced on Sept. 23 to 200 months in prison and five years supervised release. Darren Charles Roivanen, 42, Hibbing, was sentenced on Sept. 23 to 140 months in prison and five years supervised release.

Lizabeth Ann Skarja, 27, Ely, was sentenced on Sept. 18 to 151 months in prison and five years supervised release on one count of conspiracy and one count of possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

Two additional defendants connected to the case await sentencing. Derek Joseph Carlson, 27, Gilbert, was convicted by a federal jury on Feb. 7 on one count of conspiracy. Clayton John

Celley, 30, Virginia, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy.

An additional defendant connected to the case, but indicted separately, is Jesse Lee Jensrud, 27, Hibbing. Jensrud was sentenced to 188 months in prison and five years supervised release on one count of possession with intent to distribute more than 50 grams of methamphetamine. Jensrud was sentenced on April 30 by U.S. District Court Chief Judge Michael Davis.

“The Rekonen drug-trafficking organization posed a significant threat to the occupants of the Minnesota Iron Range,” said Dan Moren, assistant special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s Minneapolis District office. “The eradication of this group is nothing short of a tremendous accomplishment by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies working in collaboration. The DEA is pleased to know that Mr. Rekonen and his co-conspirators will each spend many years behind bars for the pain they inflicted to the citizens of northern Minnesota.”

This case is the result of an investigation by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the Boundary Waters Drug Task Force, the St. Louis County Sheriff’s Office and the police departments of Duluth, Hibbing, Minneapolis and Virginia. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew R. Winter.