

For Immediate Release
December 14, 2011

**FORMER FUGITIVE PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL
DRUG TRAFFICKING CHARGES**

ALBUQUERQUE – This morning in Albuquerque federal court, **Robert Widdowson**, 65, pled guilty to a five-count indictment charging him with manufacturing and trafficking illegal drugs in Taos County, N.M. At sentencing, Widdowson faces a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment and a \$1,000,000 fine. Widdowson is in federal custody and remains detained pending his sentencing hearing, which has yet to be scheduled.

U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales said that Widdowson was indicted in November 1988 and charged with (1) conspiring to manufacture N-hydroxy 3, 4-Methylenedioxyamphetamine, a designer hallucinogenic drug more commonly referred to as “Ecstasy”; (2) possession of Ecstasy with intent to distribute; (3) manufacturing of Ecstasy; (4) maintaining an establishment to manufacture Ecstasy; and (5) distribution of Ecstasy. At the time, Widdowson was a 43-year-old resident of Austin, Tex.

Widdowson was detained pending trial from the date of his arrest in November 1988 until March 1989 when the presiding United States District Judge dismissed the indictment after finding that the DEA lacked the authority to designate the drugs at issue in the indictment as illegal or restricted because Congress had specifically delegated that authority to the United States Attorney General. Upon entry of this dismissal order, the Judge set conditions of release for Widdowson during the pendency of the United States’ appeal. After the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit affirmed the order dismissing the indictment, the United States sought further review by the United States Supreme Court.

The indictment against Widdowson was reinstated in November 1991, after the Supreme

Court ruled in a case with similar facts that the DEA's actions were constitutional and vacated the Tenth Circuit's order affirming dismissal of the indictment in this case. The case against Widdowson proceeded until March 1992, when a warrant for Widdowson's arrest was issued after he absconded from pretrial supervision. Widdowson had been a fugitive for 20 years, when he was arrested by the United States Marshal's Service in Houston, Texas on December 14, 2010, after he was deported from Belize by Belize authorities.

During today's plea hearing, Widdowson pled guilty to all five counts in the indictment. In entering his guilty plea, Widdowson admitted that he manufactured approximately 120 pounds of "heaven" – his name for Ecstasy – in a residence in Rancho de Taos, N.M., where he had set up a laboratory for manufacturing "heaven." Widdowson also admitted distributing 2,000 individual doses of "heaven" to a confidential informant who was working with the DEA on October 15, 1988.

The case was investigated by the DEA with assistance from the United States Marshals Service, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Presiliano Torrez, the prosecutor who handled the case when it was indicted twenty-three years ago.

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