



NEWS RELEASE

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## **15 IN CUSTODY AS RESULT OF ROUND-UP BY VIOLENT CRIME IMPACT TEAM**

### **Investigation continues in "Operation Hilltop"**

COLUMBUS –Teams of federal, state and local law enforcement officers today arrested ten people charged in federal indictments and complaints with committing violent crimes including trafficking crack cocaine, use of firearms in drug trafficking crimes and possession of firearms by people who have been convicted of felonies. Arresting officers also seized 11 firearms including 2 SKS rifles, one AK-47, one shotgun, seven handguns along with ammunition. Charges against five people already in custody on state charges were also unsealed.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Christopher P. Sadowski, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Columbus Police Chief Walter Distelzweig and Director Terry Collins of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections announced the arrests and charges today.

They said the operation is continuing and additional defendants are being sought. The charges are the result of a 12-month investigation known as "Operation Hilltop" by Columbus Police, investigators with the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections and Ohio Adult Parole Authority, and ATF agents into drug and violent crimes in west Columbus neighborhoods. A table listing those charged is attached.

The investigation is part of an ongoing effort to reduce crimes in targeted neighborhoods by employing Violent Crime Impact Teams (VCIT) of federal, state and local law enforcement officers. The goal of the teams is to arrest the most violent offenders in the targeted area.

Those arrested have received their initial appearances in U.S. District Court in Columbus. The U.S. Attorney's Office will ask that some of those arrested be held without bond pending trial.

ATF launched the VCIT initiative in June 2004. The VCIT teams target areas of the community affected by violent crimes and firearms violence. Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies team together to identify, disrupt, arrest and prosecute the most violent criminals. The

investigators work together to proactively build cases, develop evidence, and bring the most violent criminals to justice. Teams now exist in 31 cities nationwide, including Columbus.

The agencies assisting with the arrest operation are the U.S. Marshals Service Southern Ohio Fugitive Apprehension Team (SOFAST), the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections Enforcement Unit and Adult Parole Authority, and the Ohio Division of State Fire Marshal

An indictment is merely an accusation. All defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in court.

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