



U.S. Department of Justice

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**PRESS RELEASE
*NINETEEN INDIVIDUALS FACE CHARGES
IN UTAH AFTER NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING
INVESTIGATION OF BELIZEAN BLOODS GANG***

SALT LAKE CITY – A 25-count federal indictment unsealed Friday morning in Salt Lake City charges 19 individuals with conspiracy to distribute cocaine base (crack) and cocaine hydrochloride (powder cocaine); distribution of cocaine base; distribution of cocaine; possession of cocaine with intent to distribute; and money laundering following an FBI investigation into narcotics trafficking by the Belizean Bloods street gang.

The case started in 2009 as an FBI investigation of the street gang and its associates operating in Chicago and Evanston, Illinois. During the course of the Illinois investigation, the FBI discovered that the Belizean Bloods narcotics distribution route included Utah. An Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force case was opened in Utah. An investigation by the FBI Safe Streets Task Force resulted in the federal indictment unsealed today. The indictment alleges conduct that occurred during 2011.

The Belizean Bloods street gang is primarily composed of Belizean immigrants within the United States, according to charging documents filed in court. During the course of the investigation, law enforcement identified certain individual members of the Belizean Bloods street gang that were involved in the trafficking of drugs.

“This indictment represents coordinated investigations between the FBI and U.S. Attorneys’ Offices in Salt Lake City and Chicago. Many law enforcement agencies in Utah, participating with the FBI Safe Streets Task Force, also assisted in the investigation and arrest of defendants charged in this case,” U.S. Attorney David B. Barlow said today.

“These joint efforts demonstrate the commitment we share in combating gang violence and drug trafficking in our Utah communities.”

Charged in the Utah indictment are Corey Ottley, aka Courey Ottley, age 31; Jonathan Bennis, age 23; Jerry Johnson, age 29; Makayla Walls, age 18; Javon Brackman, age 35; Austin Herron, age 24; Maurice Lee, age 48; Bladis Bazoko, age 27; Robert McIff, age 24; Dwayne McCray, age 43; Dana Byrd, age 48; Simon Diaz, age 31; Luis Diaz, age 24; Jerry Hunter, age 29; Jameson Debow, age 19; Perry Williams, age 22; Sammy Levels, age 39; and Amy El-Emar, age 29; all of Salt Lake City, and Leonard Soberanis, age 28, of Chicago. Johnson also has lived in Chicago.

Members of the FBI Safe Streets Task Force arrested Ottley, Johnson, Bennis, Walls, Luis Diaz, Debow, Williams, Levels, and El-Emar Wednesday morning. Initial appearances for them were Wednesday afternoon. Prosecutors did not seek detention for Levels, Walls, and El-Emar. They were released on pre-trial release conditions Wednesday. Brackman was arrested in Nevada where he will have an initial appearance.

A detention hearing was held for Ottley, Bennis, Luis Diaz, Debow, and Williams Friday morning. U.S. Magistrate Judge Sam Alba ordered them detained.

Lee was taken into custody Friday morning and had an initial appearance. He was released following the hearing Friday morning on pre-trial release conditions. Federal prosecutors did not seek detention for Lee.

Arrest warrants are outstanding for the remaining defendants.

“Thanks to extensive resources committed and widespread cooperation from multiple law enforcement partners, we deployed more than 150 federal agents, police officers, evidence technicians, and SWAT members throughout the Salt Lake area early Wednesday morning to safely take numerous subjects into custody. The FBI Salt Lake City Division would like to thank all of the agencies, agents, and officers who contributed to this week’s law enforcement action. Also, the FBI Safe Streets Task Force and its members should be commended for the hard work they’ve put into this investigation. Their dedication to addressing gang and drug activity continues to create safer communities throughout Utah,” FBI Special Agent in Charge David J. Johnson said.

In the related Chicago investigation, 10 federal complaints were filed and unsealed in federal court this week charging 24 members and associates of the Belizean Blood street gang with drug trafficking offenses, passport fraud, and immigration-related charges.

Johnson, who allegedly directed the Belizean Bloods drug-trafficking organization in Chicago, is charged in the Utah indictment. He also faces charges in a complaint filed by the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Chicago. He was arrested in Salt Lake City Wednesday morning. (A copy of the federal complaint filed in Chicago is attached

along with a copy of a news release issued Thursday by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Chicago.)

Ottley, Bennis, Johnson, Walls, Brackman, Herron, Bazoko, McIff, McCray, Byrd, and El-Emar are charged in Count 1 of the indictment with conspiracy to distribute cocaine base (crack). The potential penalty for this count is up to life in prison with a 10-year minimum mandatory sentence and a fine up to \$10 million.

Counts 2 through 19 of the indictment charge Ottley, Johnson, and Walls with distribution of cocaine base (crack). The potential penalty for each count of distribution of crack is up to 20 years and a fine of \$1 million.

Count 20 of the indictment charges Bennis, Simon and Luis Diaz, Lee, Hunter, Debow, Williams, and Levels with conspiracy to distribute cocaine hydrochloride (powder cocaine). The potential penalty for this count is 40 years in prison with a five-year minimum mandatory sentence. The potential maximum fine for this count is \$5 million.

Count 21 of the indictment charges Bennis and Debow with distribution of cocaine and Count 22 charges Lee with possession of cocaine base (crack) with intent to distribute. Both counts carry potential maximum sentences of up to 20 years and \$2 million fines.

The final three counts of the indictment charge Ottley, Soberanis, Walls, Bennis, and Debow with money laundering. Money laundering carries a potential penalty of 20 years in federal prison and a fine of \$1 million.

Indictments are not findings of guilt. Defendants charged by indictment are presumed innocent unless or until proven guilty in court.

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