

PRESS RELEASE

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FIRST DEFENDANT SENTENCED IN SONNENBERG DRUG CONSPIRACY

Madison, Wisconsin -- Erik C. Peterson, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Christifer Sonnenberg, 19, of Luck, Wis., was sentenced today in U.S. District Court in Madison to 5 ½ years in federal prison without parole, for distributing crack cocaine on St. Croix tribal lands. Chief Judge Barbara B. Crabb also imposed a \$1,000 fine. The remaining eight defendants have also pleaded guilty and will be sentenced later this summer.

The defendant and other members of the conspiracy worked together to obtain and distribute crack cocaine on St. Croix tribal lands from at least January 2001 through September 2008. Each of the defendants, at various times, traveled with Jean Sonnenberg and others to obtain crack cocaine from sources in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. The drugs were then sold to customers on tribal lands in northwestern Wisconsin.

During the first several months of 2008, an individual working with law enforcement officers purchased crack cocaine from various members of this conspiracy on several occasions. Each of these purchases was recorded by law enforcement

officers.

United States Attorney Peterson stated that today's sentencing was the result of a long-term investigation being conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation; Federal Bureau of Investigation; St. Croix Tribal Police Department; Rice Lake Police Department; Barron County Sheriff's Department; Burnett County Sheriff's Department; Polk County Sheriff's Department; the Native American Drug & Gang Initiative; and Wisconsin State Patrol. Peterson stated that the investigation is continuing and additional indictments and arrests are expected.

Prosecution of the cases is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney John W. Vaudreuil.

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