



U.S. Department of Justice

***United States Attorney
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CORRECTED RELEASE:

OPERATION NEWPORT TAKES SEVEN INTO CUSTODY ON COCAINE CHARGE

Little Rock - Jane W. Duke, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas; William J. Bryant, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Little Rock Field Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration; and Sheriff David Lucas, Jackson County, Arkansas announced that seven defendants were taken into custody this morning on warrants following an indictment which was returned January 6, 2010. Joe Lewis Brandon, Jr., a.k.a. Tall, age 29, of Newport; Frederick Lamond Taylor, a.k.a. Freddie O, age 30, of Newport; Henry Demon Peel, a.k.a. Moon, age 23, of Newport; Leslie Armstrong, a.k.a. Wes B, age 34, of Newport; Otis Lesley Hill, a.k.a. O, age 28, of Jonesboro; Timothy D. Maddox, a.k.a. Tim Tim, age 32, of Searcy; and Vidall Lyn Swanson, age 37, of Newport were charged with one count of conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine. They will make their initial appearance for plea and arraignment this afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Judge Beth Deere.

Due to its size and scope, the investigation has been conducted as an Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) case known as "Operation Newport". During the investigation, law enforcement agents, acting through cooperating witnesses, purchased multiple ounces of crack cocaine. Agents have also seized more than 15 kilograms of cocaine power. Cocaine powder is utilized in the manufacture of crack cocaine. The defendants distributed the crack cocaine in Newport, Jonesboro, Searcy, Blytheville, Little Rock and the surrounding towns.

This was an extensive criminal enterprise plaguing northeast and central Arkansas. The only way an organization of this nature can be adequately investigated and dismantled is through a coordinated local and federal law enforcement effort," stated Duke. "The contributions of both the Jackson County Sheriff's Office and the Jonesboro Drug Task Force were vital to the success of this operation."

All defendants face a statutory sentence of not less than 10 years and up to life in prison, a fine of \$4,000,000 or both, and 5 years of supervised release. In addition, any defendant who

has a prior drug trafficking conviction could have his sentence doubled under the federal repeat offender drug laws. There is no parole in the federal system.

This investigation is being conducted by the Little Rock Field Office, Drug Enforcement Administration; Jackson County Sheriff's Office, 2nd Judicial District (Jonesboro) Drug Task Force; 3rd Judicial District Drug Task Force; the Federal Bureau of Investigation; Internal Revenue Service-Criminal Investigation Division; Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Arkansas State Police; Arkansas Highway Police; and Arkansas National Guard. Assistant United States Attorneys Edward O. Walker and Anne Gardner are prosecuting this case for the United States.

An indictment is only an allegation of wrongdoing. Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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