



# Department of Justice

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Western District of Michigan

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**FINAL THREE DEFENDANTS THAT WERE ARRESTED IN OPERATION HOLIDAY EXPRESS RECEIVE THEIR SENTENCES; ONE CALIFORNIA DEFENDANT REMAINS A FUGITIVE**

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN. – U.S. Attorney Donald A. Davis, ATF Resident Agent-In-Charge Sonja A. Everitt, and Lansing Police Chief Teresa Szymanski announced the federal sentences of the final three defendants arrested and prosecuted in “Operation Holiday Express,” an Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (“OCDETF”) investigation led by the U.S. Justice Department’s Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF) and the Lansing Police Department. In Operation Holiday Express, investigators from these two law enforcement agencies followed the cocaine and money trails back to Detroit, the Central District of California, and the State of Nevada where additional defendants were identified and indicted in the Western District of Michigan. A total of 43 defendants have been charged, convicted and sentenced as a result of the investigations associated with the operation.

Roberto Espinosa Farias, age 57, of San Luis Obispo, California, was sentenced last month to 340 months (over 28 years) in prison and fined \$25,000 as a result of his April 18, 2011 guilty plea to a cocaine conspiracy charge. Dr. Owusu A. Firemong, age 60, of Los Angeles, California, was sentenced to 324 months (27 years) in prison and Marlan McRae, age 37, of Macomb, Michigan, was sentenced to 235 months (over 19 years) in prison as a result of their convictions. Both Dr. Firemong and McRae were convicted by a jury in May following a three-week trial in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Like Farias, both Dr. Firemong and McRae were convicted of a cocaine conspiracy charge involving the trafficking of thousands of kilograms of cocaine between California and Michigan starting in the late 1990s and continuing into 2009. Dr. Firemong also was convicted of a money laundering conspiracy count, principally for laundering over \$206,000 of drug funds through his corporate medical accounts and then using the laundered funds to purchase a motor home that other coconspirators used to transport hundreds of kilograms of cocaine from California to Michigan on a monthly basis and return to California with over a million dollars of drug proceeds every trip. The investigation revealed that over \$176M of drug proceeds were generated by the sale of cocaine from two separate drug trafficking organizations from the Los Angeles, California area.

The sentences were handed down by Chief U.S. District Judge Paul L. Maloney, who also entered money judgments of \$40,576,750 against Dr. Firemong and \$17,280,000 against McRae. To date, Chief Judge Maloney has issued forfeiture orders against other defendants forfeiting several million dollars in cash and accounts, motor vehicles, real estate in both Michigan and California, and items of personal property, including furs and jewelry, that either were purchased with or facilitated the drug conspiracy, or constitute substituted assets for drug proceeds that investigators were unable to recover.

Other significant sentences received in the case include a sentence of life in prison for Charles Jackson, Sr., 48, of Los Angeles, California. Jackson, Sr., who was one of the two kingpins who supplied the cocaine and arranged for its delivery to Michigan, had been indicted on cocaine charges in 1998 out of the Eastern District of Michigan (Detroit) but had successfully avoided apprehension by law enforcement for over a decade with the assistance of his family members, including his son, Charles Jackson, Jr. As part of his plea agreement with the U.S. Attorney's Office, Jackson, Jr., age 26, of Los Angeles, California, was permitted to plead guilty to the same cocaine conspiracy charge in his home state of California, and on November 15, 2011, he was sentenced to 57 months in federal prison.

In addition, on March 31, 2011, Codefendant Emond Durea Logan, age 50, of Riverside, California, was sentenced to 420 months (35 years) for his role in the cocaine conspiracy and for his efforts to obstruct the prosecution of the case. In 2010, while on bond in California, Logan was recorded on tape talking to an ATF confidential source about plans to eliminate a witness against him and possibly the prosecutor as well. On the tape recording, Logan also admitted to contacting a known witness in violation of his bond. Both before Logan was released on bond and after he was arrested and held in custody for making the threats, Logan told other inmates and detainees about his intentions to intimidate or eliminate a key witness or the prosecutor.

The three-week trial before Chief Judge Maloney in April and May 2011 included testimony that a significant amount of the cocaine from Los Angeles was sold in and around the Lansing, Michigan area between 2001 and 2006 by a street gang called AHH DEE AHH. Federal prosecution of AHH DEE AHH began in 2005, resulting in the conviction of 27 members and associates, including its Detroit-based leaders, Jamokentayette Curtis Hampton and Damond Dshan Bean, and its New York/New Jersey-based heroin supplier, Daniel Hankinson. In 2007, U.S. District Judge Robert Holmes Bell sentenced Hampton to 29 years in prison, Bean, to 22 years, and Hankinson to 15 years in prison.

One defendant, Samuel Collins, 48, of Los Angeles, California, is a fugitive and remains at large.

Along with ATF and the Lansing Police Department, the agencies involved in the Operation Holiday Express investigation included the Justice Department's Great Lakes Regional OCDETF Office in Chicago, Illinois, the National Drug Intelligence Center in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and LA-IMPACT, a multi-jurisdictional drug team that operates in the greater Los Angeles area.

Lansing Police Chief Teresa Szymanski commented that she was "extremely proud of the dedication and pure commitment that went into this case. The partnerships and collaboration from the multi-agency investigation all came together. This is a true partnership. To see a drug ring from Lansing to California be dismantled, proves that hard work does pay off! This is the kind of outcome that Law Enforcement works hard for. It sends a message to other Drug dealers/traffickers that Lansing takes crime seriously."

According to ATF Resident Agent In Charge, Sonja Everitt, "ATF and the Lansing Police Department have a long and very productive history targeting the offenders who damage and intimidate our communities. Operation Holiday Express is a great example of what our two law enforcement agencies can accomplish working together with a common goal. The city of Lansing is reaping the rewards of their partnership with the elimination of this significant drug trafficking organization that was bringing millions of dollars of pain, misery and violent crime that always accompanies the illicit sale of narcotics in our community. Although ATF and the

Lansing Police Department conducted this long term investigation, if not for the hard work by the United States Attorneys Office prosecuting this case we would not have been able to remove this drug trafficking organization from our streets permanently.”

U.S. Attorney Don Davis added “The investigators and prosecutors were tenacious in tracking down coconspirators and their ill-gotten gains in four states. We anticipate that after all the assets are sold we will return to Lansing and deliver a significant portion of the forfeited drug proceeds to the Lansing Police Department, which played a crucial role in the success of Operation Holiday Express.”

Operation Holiday Express was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Brian P. Lennon and Joel S. Fauson.

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