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News Release

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Soudan, Minnesota, man pleads guilty to conspiring to distribute methamphetamine

Earlier today in federal court in Minneapolis, a 32-year-old man from the northeastern Minnesota community of Soudan pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute 500 or more grams of methamphetamine. Frank Edward Popesh pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy. He was indicted, along with two co-defendants, on November 17, 2010. Popesh entered his plea before United States District Court Judge David S. Doty.

In his plea agreement, Popesh admitted that from January of 2009 through October of 2010, he conspired with others to obtain illegal substances, including methamphetamine, for distribution to others. They obtained the methamphetamine from a source in the Twin Cities and transported it to customers in northern Minnesota. Popesh admitted that on October 12, 2009, he obtained approximately two pounds of methamphetamine that he hid in the lining of a cooler. Popesh transported the methamphetamine to northern Minnesota, but during the trip, his vehicle was stopped by the Minnesota State Patrol in Carlton County. The State Patrol seized the cooler, approximately \$10,000 in cash, and eventually recovered the methamphetamine. Approximately one year later, on October 18, 2010, Popesh was arrested on his way to meet a co-defendant to obtain more methamphetamine. Following Popesh's arrest, law enforcement executed a search warrant at his Soudan, Minnesota, residence, where they found a 26-plant marijuana grow operation and nine firearms.

On February 23, 2011, co-defendant David Boder, age 27, no known address, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute 50 or more grams of methamphetamine. In his plea agreement, Boder admitted participating in the drug trafficking conspiracy that involved Popesh and others. Specifically, Boder admitted that on October 17, 2010, outside of North Branch, he purchased a single pound of methamphetamine during an arranged controlled buy involving law enforcement. He was arrested immediately following the transaction.

On January 21, 2011, co-defendant Casey Robert Knase, age 22, no known address, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute marijuana. He too admitted participating in the drug trafficking conspiracy that involved Popesh and others. He also indicated that during the course of that conspiracy, the defendants obtained more than 20 kilograms of marijuana. In addition, Knase admitted that on October 17, 2010, he provided approximately \$4,000 to Boder for the purpose of purchasing marijuana, but instead, Boder used it to buy one pound of methamphetamine. Knase, who drove Boder to the arranged controlled buy described above, was arrested, along with Boder, following the transaction. Boder and Knase admittedly distributed cocaine and ecstasy too.

For their crimes, Popesh faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison, with a mandatory minimum penalty of ten years. Boder faces a potential maximum penalty of 40 years, with a mandatory minimum penalty of five years. Knase faces a potential maximum penalty of 20 years. Judge Doty will determine their sentences at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the Carlton County Sheriff's Office, the Chisago County Sheriff's Office, the Boundary Waters Drug Task Force, the Pine County Sheriff's Office, the Cloquet Police Department, the Minnesota State Patrol, and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven L. Schleicher.

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