



**United States Department of Justice  
United States Attorney's Office  
District of Minnesota**

**B. Todd Jones,  
United States Attorney**

**Jeanne F. Cooney  
Director of Community Relations  
(612) 664-5611  
email: [jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov](mailto:jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov)**

# **News Release**

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## **Duluth man sentenced for distributing crack cocaine and being a career criminal**

Curtis Lavelle Harris, the leader of a crack cocaine distribution ring in the Duluth area from May of 2008 through June of 2009, was sentenced today in federal court in Minneapolis for his role in that operation. United States District Court Judge John R. Tunheim ordered Harris, age 38, of Duluth, to serve 90 months in federal prison after he pleaded guilty on November 24, 2009, to one count of conspiracy to distribute more than 50 grams of crack cocaine. Because of his extensive criminal history, Harris was found by the court to be a career criminal, as defined in the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, and the sentence imposed on him today reflects that finding. Harris and two co-defendants were indicted on August 11, 2009.

In entering his guilty plea, Harris admitted conspiring to distribute between 50 and 150 grams of crack cocaine during the time period noted above. His criminal history includes state court convictions for domestic battery in 1998, manufacturing controlled substances in 2001, possession of a controlled substance in 2001, and possession of fifth-degree controlled substances in 2003.

On May 10, 2010, Judge Tunheim sentenced one of Harris's co-defendants. Natalie Lynn Bartell, age 40, of Duluth, to 36 months in prison on one count of conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine. She pleaded guilty on November 24, 2009. Another defendant, Karen Marie Davey, age 32, of Superior, Wisconsin, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute crack cocaine and will be sentenced by Judge Tunheim on March 8, 2011.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Duluth Police Department and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Steven L. Schleicher and Christian S. Wilton.

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