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United States Attorney's Office
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News Release

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Twenty-seven indicted for distributing controlled substances in the Twin Ports' area

MINNEAPOLIS—A federal indictment unsealed late yesterday charges 27 people with conspiring to distribute controlled substances, including oxycodone, oxymorphone, and heroin in the Twin Ports' area of Duluth, Minnesota, and Superior, Wisconsin. The indictment, which was filed on September 20, 2011, charges the defendants with one count of conspiracy to distribute controlled substances. The indictment was unsealed following the initial appearance of 25 of the defendants in federal court. Of the 25 defendants, 11 have been preliminary detained pending further proceedings. In addition, one defendant is in state custody while another turned himself in to authorities in Colorado.

Those charged include Daniel Albert Amatuzio, age 23; Kyle Richard Bergman, age 22; Jeffrey James Boshey, age 34; Brad Rodney Christofferson, age 22; Rhonda Ann Davis, age 24; Ryan James Drickhamer, age 22; Brian Troy Eastlick, age 22; Zachary John Hamel, age 20; Justin Paul Johnson, age 20; Rindi Kay Koenen, age 19; Jacob Keith Nagle, age 23; Eric Phillip Romero, age 43; Sean Patrick Saylor, age 18; Gordon Eugene Sharp, age 23; Caine Ramus Starks, age 29; Daniel Allen Stenzel, age 23; and Nicholas Zane Worley, age 23, all of Duluth; Dillon Phillip Beyers, age 20; Jeffrey Lamont Liddell, age 27; Veronique Zsazsaantique Muckle, age 21; Brian Keith Portis, age 21; Cletis Bernard Portis, age 31; and Angelique Michelle Vos, age 22, all of Superior, Wisconsin; Lawrence Lalonde Colton, age 42, of Detroit, Michigan; Johnnie Lee Leddell, age 30, of Brooklyn Park; Ian Philip Stauber, age 23, of Hermantown, Minnesota; and Krystal Lynn Willis, age 25, of Esko, Minnesota.

The indictment alleges that from 2010 through September of 2011, the defendants conspired with each other and others to distribute oxycodone, oxymorphone, hydromorphone, and heroin, all of which are powerful pain killers and/or narcotics.

In addition, Liddell, also known as Jy General, J.G., and Little Jeff, was charged with one count of continuing a criminal enterprise. The indictment alleges he occupied a position of organizer or leader of a continuing criminal enterprise that committed numerous violations of the Controlled Substance Abuse Act. He also was charged with six counts of distribution of controlled substances.

Moreover, Amatuzio, Johnson, Leddell, Saylor, Stauber, Willis, and Worley were charged with one count of possession with intent to distribute controlled substances, while Bergman was charged with two counts of that offense. Starks was further charged with four counts of using a firearm during and in relation to a drug-trafficking crime.

Several defendants also were charged with distributing controlled substances: Amatuzio (one count), Bergman (one count), Beyers (three counts), Boshey (four counts), Christofferson (two counts), Colton (two counts), Davis (two counts), Drickhamer (two counts), Eastlick (one count), Hamel (three counts), Johnson (one count), Koenen (one count), Leddell (one count), Muckle (six counts), Nagle (four counts), Brian Portis (one count), Cletis Portis (two counts), Romero (three counts), Sharp (seven counts), Starks (eight counts), Stauber (three counts), Stenzel (four counts), Vos (two counts), and Worley (one count).

Authorities began investigating the group in 2010, after law enforcement noted an increase in Opana trafficking in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Opana contains the controlled substance oxymorphone. Officers conducted dozens of controlled purchases and other investigation before the arrests in this case. In addition, on September 27, 2011, search warrants were executed at nine properties in Minnesota and Wisconsin where authorities seized firearms, ammunition, approximately \$30,000, as well as narcotics.

If convicted, the defendants each face a potential maximum penalty of 20 years in prison on the conspiracy charge, 20 years on each possession count and 20 years on each distribution count. In addition, Liddell faces a potential maximum penalty of life for continuing a criminal enterprise (which has a mandatory minimum penalty of 20 years), while Starks faces a mandatory minimum penalty of 10 additional years for the first firearm allegation, which involved a sawed-off shotgun. Each subsequent firearm count includes additional 25-year sentences. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Lake Superior Drug and Gang Task Force, the Duluth Police Department, the Hermantown Police Department and the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Allen A. Slaughter.

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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.