



# Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2010  
<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/ohs>

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## **FINAL DEFENDANTS APPREHENDED IN 38-PERSON CHILLICOTHE DRUG TRAFFICKING CASE PLEAD GUILTY**

CHILLICOTHE – Daniel Vance Walls, 45, of Bainbridge and Mark L. May, 51, of Peebles have pleaded guilty to charges of conspiracy to distribute and possess with intent to distribute more than 100 kilograms of marijuana from late 1997 through March 2008; and attempted possession with intent to distribute more than 100 kilograms of marijuana on October 17, 2004. They are the last of 38 defendants apprehended due to charges filed in a series of indictments beginning in October 2004 through February, 2009, as part of a large-scale drug trafficking investigation in south central Ohio. All others apprehended as part of the investigation have pleaded guilty.

Carter M. Stewart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio; Keith L. Bennett, Special Agent in Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation Cincinnati Field Division (FBI); Pete Tobin, Superintendent, Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation in Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray's Office; Ross County Prosecutor Michael Ater; Randy Bliss, Director, Route 23 Pipeline Drug Task Force; Ross County Sheriff George Lavender; Fayette County Sheriff Vernon Stanforth; Highland County Sheriff Ron Ward; Preble County Sheriff Michael Simpson; Scioto County Sheriff Marty Donini; Waverly Police Chief Larry Roe and Anthony Gonzalez, Special Agent in Charge, Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation (IRS) announced the pleas entered February 14 and February 12 respectively.

The charges stemmed from an operation known as "Chilly Loco." The focus of this investigation was to develop historical narcotics cases on major traffickers in Ross, Highland, Pike, Fayette and Scioto counties.

The investigation began in 2004 when agents with the Route 23 Pipeline Drug Task Force approached the FBI with information regarding a number of individuals who had been distributing substantial quantities of cocaine, crack, and marijuana for ten to 15 years in the area. Even though these individuals had been arrested in the past for isolated transactions, they had served short jail terms and then returned to the area to continue selling narcotics.

"The FBI began working with members of the Task Force to develop sufficient evidence to prosecute these major traffickers for the full scope of their criminal activity, utilizing evidence of both historical and current activity," Stewart said. "Law enforcement officers with the Ross County Sheriff's Office, Fayette County Sheriff's Office, Highland County Sheriff's Office, Scioto County Sheriff's Office and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification began to work together. The IRS, Criminal Investigation, joined the investigation to assist in the financial investigation of some of these major traffickers. As needed, task force officers from Lawrence County Sheriff's Office, the Ironton Police Department, the Jackson Police Dept., the Jackson County Sheriff's Office and the Preble County Sheriff's Office also assisted in the

investigation. As a result of their hard work and diligent effort, 24 separate indictments and bills of information were returned in this investigation.”

A list of those charged and convicted is attached.

The investigation into Walls and May began as a result of a traffic stop on October 17, 2004, in Preble County, Ohio. Deputies with the Preble County Sheriff’s Office stopped a white pickup truck and found more than 400 pounds of marijuana. The driver of the vehicle, Paul Burnes of Mesa, Arizona, agreed to cooperate with authorities and go through with the delivery of the marijuana to the Ohio buyers who were waiting with the source of supply at a truck stop at the Jeffersonville mall exit at I-71 and State Route 35. Members of the Fayette County Sheriff’s Office, Preble County Sheriff’s Office, BCI and FBI set up surveillance of the area. They saw the driver of the pickup truck meet with two other vehicles, a white van driven by May and a maroon pickup truck, driven by Walls. Burnes was charged with possession with intent to distribute over 100 kilograms of marijuana and was sentenced to 48 months in prison

The three vehicles left the mall in a caravan, with the pickup truck containing the marijuana in the middle. The vehicles were followed in this caravan for approximately 10 miles through Fayette County, until law enforcement authorities pulled them over. In the van with May was Raymundo Carranza from Arizona. In the pickup truck with Walls, was Jose Guadalupe Canez from Mexico.

Following that stop, the four were released from state custody and the case was referred for federal prosecution as part of the Chilly Loco investigation. Over the past five years, investigators developed additional evidence to establish Walls had been trafficking in marijuana in this area since at least 1997. Walls developed sources in both Arizona and San Diego, California and arranged for the shipment of marijuana to him for distribution in Pike County and the surrounding area.

Investigating agents subsequently learned that the 400 pounds seized on October 17, 2004 was to be delivered to Walls. Canez was the supplier from Mexico. Canez had recruited Carranza to travel with him to Ohio to assist in the delivery of the marijuana to Walls. May was recruited by his brother to help with unloading the shipment. The four were on their way to property owned by Walls’ family to offload the shipment when law enforcement agents stopped them.

Walls and May each face at least five years and up to 40 years imprisonment. No sentencing date has been set. Carranza has also pled guilty to his involvement in this conspiracy. He is also awaiting sentencing. Canez is currently a fugitive.

Special recognition should be given to the lead investigators: Randy Bliss, Randy Sanders and Twila Goble with the Ross County Sheriff’s Office and Brian Carroll and Don Bean of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Stewart also acknowledged Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robyn Hahnert and Kevin Kelley, who prosecuted the case.

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