



Department of Justice

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TWO MORE SENTENCED FOR ROLES IN CHILlicothe DRUG TRAFFICKING RING

COLUMBUS – Two more people charged as part of an ongoing large scale drug trafficking investigation in south central Ohio were sentenced in United States District Court here. Daniel Vance Walls, 45, of Bainbridge was sentenced to 110 months imprisonment and fined \$20,000. Mark L. May, 51, of Peebles was sentenced to 48 months imprisonment.

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 sentences imposed yesterday by U.S. District Judge Gregory L. Frost.

Each man pleaded guilty in February 2010 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.

The investigation into Walls and May began with 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 from 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.

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.

"Over the five years that followed, investigators developed additional evidence to establish Walls had been trafficking in marijuana in this area since at least 1997," Stewart said. "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."

The charges are part of an ongoing 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. A list of those charged to date is attached.

Stewart commended investigators with the Ross County Sheriff's Office and FBI agents for their lead in the cooperative investigation. Stewart also acknowledged Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robyn Hahnert and Kevin Kelley, who prosecuted the case.

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