



PRESS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF WEST VIRGINIA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Twenty-Two Arrested on Federal Drug Indictments U. S. Attorney Lauds Task Force Approach

CLARKSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA — United States Attorney William J. Ihlenfeld, II, announced that 18 arrests were made this morning in one of the largest federal criminal Indictments in this area in recent memory. The charges are the result of the hard work of the officers that make up what was formerly known as the Harrison/Lewis County Drug & Violent Crimes Task Force (Task Force), as well as the work of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

“It is my sincere hope that these charges will help us to turn the corner in our efforts to keep heroin and other illegal drugs out of North Central West Virginia,” stated USA Ihlenfeld. “I’m a big proponent of the drug task force concept. A drug task force can do what uniform officers cannot, and what street crimes units cannot, and that is thoroughly investigate a criminal enterprise and completely dismantle it. A fully staffed task force can keep highly addictive and destructive drugs such as heroin from gaining a stranglehold in a community. Buy-busts, or traffic stops with one arrest and no follow up, can have a small impact and perhaps disrupt drug activity, but a longer investigation can have a very large and far-reaching impact and is much more likely to make our community a safer place to live and work.”

The arrests are the culmination of an investigation of a large heroin and firearm trafficking conspiracy in Harrison County. The action taken by the Task Force and the ATF was in response to numerous citizen complaints about heroin trafficking in the North View Section of Clarksburg. The drug dealers were identified through intelligence gathering, and Task Force officers were able to make controlled buys from the dealers in the investigation, which was conducted in Clarksburg, Nutter Fort, and Bridgeport. USA Ihlenfeld said, “Halfway into the investigation one of the drug targets offered to sell a stolen gun to an undercover officer. Once word got around that the undercover officer was interested in the purchase of firearms, eight separate heroin users/or distributors sold a total of 17 guns to informants, 14 of which have been confirmed to be stolen. Thus, the Indictment includes a firearm trafficking conspiracy, as well as various substantive firearm trafficking counts.”

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In total, 21 defendants are named in the 65-count indictment, with 41 drug charges, and 24 gun charges. Of the drug charges, most involve heroin and two involve cocaine or “crack” cocaine.

This morning, a roundup was conducted by agents with the following departments: Harrison County Drug and Violent Crimes Task Force, Bridgeport Police Department, Clarksburg Police Department, Harrison County Sheriff’s Department, ATF, United States Marshal Service, Drug Enforcement Administration, Three Rivers Drug Task Force (consisting of the Fairmont Police Department and the Monongah Police Department), and West Virginia Probation and Parole. Thus far, of the 21 defendants, 13 have been arrested, and agents are still looking for 3 defendants, while 5 are in custody on unrelated charges.

The names of those arrested thus far are: CHASTY ANDERSON, age 21, of Clarksburg; BRANDON BAXTER, age 23, of Clarksburg; JOSEPH DALE BENNETT, age 26, of Cambria; MATTHEW E. BOONE, age 26, of Clarksburg; MICHAEL ROSS CAWTHON, age 23, of Gassaway; COLLIN ELLIS, age 22, of Clarksburg; DESTINY JENKINS, age 19, of Clarksburg; NANCY JO NICHOLAS, age 45, of Clarksburg; JONATHAN M. PEET, age 26, of Clarksburg; PATRICK JAMES PEET, age 27, Clarkburg; NIKKI PIERCE, age 18, of Clarksburg; TAUSHA PIERCE, age 24, of Clarksburg; and JOSEPH BOYD SWIGER, also known as “JOB,” age 30, of Jane Lew.

The names of those who are still wanted are: ERIC JAMES GOLDEN, age 27, of Horner; ROBERT LEE KERBY, age 26, of Bridgeport; and THOMAS MICHAEL PAUGH, age 25, of Mount Clare.

The following individuals are in custody on unrelated charges: JUSTIN BRIAN CARPENTER, also known as “CARP,” age 27, of Shinnston; BRITTANY KIRBY CRAIG, age 22, of Fairmont; ADAM SCOTT FREEMAN, age 24, of Clarksburg; JEREMY LYNN FREEMAN, age 29, of Clarksburg; and MICHEL LOREN GRIFFITH, age 24.

Please see the attached Defendant Data Sheets for specific charges on each defendant.

The firearm conspiracy charge carries a 5 year maximum sentence, the firearm possession and distribution charges carry 10 year maximums, the drug distribution charges have 20 year maximums; the drug distribution charges within 1,000 feet of protected locations carry sentences of 1 to 40 years; and the heroin conspiracy charge, which impacts 17 of the 21 defendants, carries a sentence of 5 to 40 years. It’s safe to say that these are very serious charges.

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The 65-count Indictment is not the only case that the Task Force has been working on. Additional indictments were returned against the following individuals as a result of the efforts of the Task Force:

CHARLES D. WASHINGTON, also known as "BUBBY," age 41, of Clarksburg, was indicted on 5 counts of selling "crack" cocaine, one count of possession with intent to distribute "crack," and one count of aiding and abetting the distribution of "crack" within 1,000 feet of Adamston Elementary School. JOHN S. CAYTON , age 42, of Clarksburg, was charged in the same Indictment with one count of aiding and abetting the distribution of "crack." If convicted, the defendants face a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment and a fine of \$1,000,000. On the distribution counts that occurred within 1,000 feet of a school, the penalty doubles. WASHINGTON and CAYTON were both arrested this morning.

THEODORE ALFRED, age 54, of Bridgeport, West Virginia, was indicted on 7 counts of distribution of prescription medication, including Hydrocodone, Methadone, Zanax, Klonopin, Lomotil, Darvocet, and Subutex. If convicted, ALFRED faces penalties ranging from 3 to 20 years imprisonment on the various drugs. Two of the distribution counts occurred within 1,000 feet of a school, doubling the penalty. ALFRED was arrested this morning.

SHAWN LONG, age 43, of Clarksburg, was indicted on 5 counts of distribution of prescription medication and 2 counts of distribution of cocaine. Five of the sales were alleged to have occurred within 1,000 feet of North View Elementary School, which doubles the penalties. The distribution counts carry a maximum penalty of 20 years imprisonment and a fine of \$1,000,000; with the exception of Hydrocodone, which carries a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment and a fine of \$250,000. LONG was arrested this morning.

It is important to note that an Indictment is merely an accusation, and all of the individuals charged by the grand jury are innocent until proven guilty.

The 65-count indictment, along with the WASHINGTON case, will be handled by Criminal Chief Shawn Angus Morgan.

The THEODORE ALFRED and SHAWN LONG cases will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Zelda E. Wesley.

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“The Harrison County Drug and Violent Crimes Task Force is vital to the safety of this community,” said USA Ihlenfeld. “It can bring down criminal enterprises like no other law enforcement group we have in this part of the state. I commend the officers who make up this unit, and also the leaders of the departments that devote resources to the Task Force. I appeal to our city council people and county commissioners to continue to support this Task Force and to add even more resources so that it can continue to produce great results like we’ve announced today.”

Harrison County Sheriff Albert F. Marano stated, “We’re encouraged at the fact that all of the agencies work well together and were able to put together an investigation that made several arrests in this area. We anticipate this being beneficial for the area in that several drug dealers and firearms dealers will be off the streets.”

According to Bridgeport Police Chief John Walker, “These arrests are the results of intense ongoing investigations including local and federal authorities. We are committed to continue the fight against those individuals who choose to come into our communities and put our families in harms way.”

“When we have the cooperation of so many agencies, the general public and law enforcement wins in the fight against illegal weapons and drugs in this region. I am proud that the Clarksburg Police Department is able to align ourselves with the other agencies and work with the United States Attorney’s Office and the Harrison County Prosecuting Attorney’s Office. This is a continuing fight to rid the region of illegal drug activity,” stated Clarksburg Police Chief Marshall H. Goff.

ATF Special Agent in Charge Paul J. Vido said, “During this undercover operation, we were able to take firearms off the street that could have been used in violent crimes. The vast majority of these firearms were stolen. As a result, the community is safer today.”

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