



# Department of Justice

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## **Lexington Man Sentenced to 35 Years for Conspiring to Traffic in Fluorofentanyl**

**LEXINGTON, Ky.**— A Lexington man, Michael Byrd, 34, was sentenced to 35 years in federal prison on Monday, by Chief U.S. District Judge Danny Reeves, for conspiracy to distribute fluorofentanyl, possession with intent to distribute 100 grams or more of fluorofentanyl, and possession with intent to distribute 10 grams or more of fluorofentanyl.

Byrd was charged in a second superseding indictment, along with Je'Von Byrd, 22, and Savannah Asberry, 27. Byrd pleaded guilty to conspiring with others to distribute the drugs, from January 2021 to May 2022, in Fayette County. During the investigation, large quantities of illegal drugs were seized, following searches of a vehicle and Lexington residence – as well as from items collected from a foot pursuit, where a police canine overdosed from exposure to drugs. At his sentencing hearing, the Court determined that Byrd's role in the conspiracy involved more than 4.6 kilograms of fluorofentanyl, as well as enhancements for firearm possession and maintaining a premises for drug distribution.

Byrd had previously been convicted in Louisville, of first-degree robbery, first degree burglary, kidnapping, wanton endangerment, and first degree fleeing or evading police, in 2008, and of being convicted felon in possession of a handgun, in 2017.

Byrd pleaded guilty to the charges in October 2022. Asberry pleaded guilty and was sentenced in November 2022, to 120 months in prison, followed by five years of supervised release. Je'Von Byrd has pleaded guilty and is scheduled to be sentenced on February 24, 2023.

Under federal law, Byrd must serve 85 percent of his prison sentence. Upon his release from prison, he will be under the supervision of the U.S. Probation Office for 10 years.

“In addition to his extensive and violent criminal history, the defendant was illegally dealing in massive amounts of fluorofentanyl, a powerful opioid analogue of fentanyl,” said Carlton S. Shier, IV, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky. “This drug is particularly dangerous and frequently fatal – and he was responsible for more than four and half kilograms. In this case, a police canine was exposed to it, overdosed, and needed veterinary care. Clearly, the risk to the public from his conduct was enormous. His sentence is certainly

warranted and would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of all our law enforcement partners.”

“Drug dealers with guns are criminals who pose an increased threat to the safety of our communities,” said ATF Acting Special Agent in Charge Robert Maynard of the Louisville Division. “The sentencing of Michael Byrd is another example of the ongoing efforts of ATF and the Lexington Police Department working together to make our communities safer for everyone.”

United States Attorney Shier; ATF Acting SAC Maynard; and Chief Lawrence Weathers, Lexington Police Department, jointly announced the sentence.

The investigation was conducted by the ATF and Lexington Police Department. The United States was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Cindy Rieker.

This case was prosecuted as part of the Department of Justice’s “Project Safe Neighborhoods” Program (PSN), which is a nationwide, crime reduction strategy aimed at decreasing violent crime in communities. It involves a comprehensive approach to public safety – one that includes investigating and prosecuting crimes, along with prevention and reentry efforts. In the Eastern District of Kentucky, U.S. Attorney Shier coordinates PSN efforts in cooperation with various federal, state, and local law enforcement officials.

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