



# Department of Justice

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## Whitley County Man Pleads Guilty to Federal Murder Charge

**LONDON, Ky.** - A Woodbine, Ky., man, Danial Scott Nantz, 33, entered a guilty plea on Thursday, before U.S. District Judge Robert E. Wier, to the intentional murder of a federal witness, Geri D. Johnson.

According to the investigation and plea agreement, Nantz was engaged in methamphetamine trafficking throughout Whitley County from March of 2017 through March of 2019. In the Spring of 2019, some of Nantz's methamphetamine sources of supply and co-conspirators were indicted by a federal grand jury. One of these co-conspirators was Johnson, who was pregnant, and with whom Nantz had a romantic relationship.

Prior to the murder, Nantz learned that Johnson had provided a statement to law enforcement and had been offered the opportunity to cooperate against him. Nantz discussed the fact he was a target of the federal methamphetamine trafficking investigation with Johnson. A handwritten note, written by Nantz, was recovered from the murder scene, which read "Funeral/fed's pulled geri out asking questions." Nantz had grown increasingly concerned that he too would be indicted for methamphetamine trafficking and that Johnson would cooperate against him. He also sent text messages to Johnson in the days leading up to the murder. On March 13, 2019, Nantz texted Johnson "I'll kill you [expletive]." And on March 14, 2019, Nantz texted Johnson, "Your very dangerous for me. Very very dangerous."

Then, on March 16, 2019, Johnson was home, with Nantz's minor children, at Nantz's trailer in Woodbine. Nantz arrived, ordered his children into their bedroom, and followed Johnson outside the residence. Nantz then shot the victim twice with a .38 revolver. One round struck the victim in the back right shoulder and the other pierced the victim's neck. The autopsy revealed the round through the victim's neck ultimately caused her to asphyxiate on her blood.

After the shooting, Nantz drove Johnson to the hospital in Corbin, Kentucky, where she was pronounced dead. Johnson's daughter was born, via emergency Cesarean section, at seven months gestation. The child died several days later, due to the damage she suffered from the loss of oxygen and blood caused by her mother's injuries.

Carlton S. Shier, IV, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Shawn S. Morrow, Special Agent in Charge, ATF, Louisville Field Division; and Commissioner Phillip Burnett, Kentucky State Police, jointly announced the guilty plea.

The investigation was conducted by the ATF and KSP. The United States was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jenna E. Reed.

Nantz is scheduled to be sentenced on July 17, 2023. Nantz faces a mandatory minimum of Life in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

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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