



# UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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## **FOUR DEFENDANTS CONVICTED OF CONSPIRACY TO DISTRIBUTE CRYSTAL METHAMPHETAMINE**

*Jury deliberates for several hours before returning a guilty verdict*

**Lafayette, Louisiana:** United States Attorney Donald W. Washington, along with the members of the South Central Louisiana Safe Streets Gang Task Force, announced the convictions of **BOUNTHONG XAPHILOM, DUC HUU PHAM, CHRISTOPHER AUCOIN** and **MISAY CHANDAKHAM**, all of whom were found guilty for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute crystal methamphetamine. The trial commenced on January 21, 2009 and the jury deliberated for approximately four hours before returning their verdict.

XAPHILOM, PHAM, AUCOIN and CHANDAKHAM were indicted in October 2007, along with five other defendants, to include Arthur Basaldua, a ring leader of this conspiracy, all of whom have already plead guilty.

This case was the result of an investigation by the Gang Task Force, which was established in January 2007, into the trafficking of crystal methamphetamine in Lafayette and Iberia parishes. Evidence at trial showed that members of the Cuatro Flats Gang in Los Angeles brought the drugs to the Acadiana area in a number of stolen vehicles from the Los Angeles area to distribute to several local gangs.

The defendant, DUC HUU PHAM, was also convicted of two counts of using a communication facility, that is, a telephone, to further the methamphetamine distribution business. Each defendant is being detained pending sentencing.

The four defendants convicted today each face a minimum of ten years imprisonment up to life in prison; a fine up to \$4,000,000.00, and a mandatory term of five years supervised release after confinement. In addition, PHAM faces up to four years in prison on each of the two communication facility counts.

The five defendants who have already plead guilty are as follows:

**ARTHUR BASALDUA**, a/k/a Yogi, a/k/a Joey, a/k/a Art, a/k/a Artie, a/k/a Leo Perez, a/k/a Joe Perez, age 29 of New Iberia, Louisiana; plead guilty to one felony count of continuing criminal enterprise, which carries a minimum mandatory sentence of 20 years imprisonment, a fine up to \$4,000,000.00, and a mandatory term of five years supervised release after confinement;

**ISRAEL PEREZ**, age 26, New Iberia, Louisiana; plead guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute crystal methamphetamine, which carries a minimum of ten years imprisonment up to life in prison, a fine up to \$4,000,000.00, and a mandatory term of five years supervised release after confinement;

**ENG CHAMPKUNGSING**, age 29, Broussard, Louisiana; plead guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute crystal methamphetamine, which carries a minimum of ten years imprisonment up to life in prison, a fine up to \$4,000,000.00, and a mandatory term of five years supervised release after confinement;

**PHANUT PHONCHINDA**, a/k/a Peanut, age 25, New Iberia, Louisiana; plead guilty to a one-count Bill of Information for possession with intent to distribute crystal methamphetamine, which carries a minimum mandatory term of imprisonment of five years up to forty years, a fine up to \$2,000,000.00, and a minimum mandatory term of supervised release of four years but not more than five years, after confinement; and

**TRAVIS JOSEPH**, age 25, New Iberia, Louisiana plead guilty to a one-count Bill of Information for unlawful use of communication facility, which carries a term of imprisonment of up to four years, a fine up to \$250,000.00, and a mandatory supervised release of three years following confinement..

The South Central Louisiana Safe Streets Gang Task Force is comprised of agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Lafayette Parish Sheriff's Office, Iberia Parish Sheriff's Office, St. Mary Parish Sheriff's Office, St. Landry Parish Sheriff's Office, Lafayette Police Department and Morgan City Police Department.

United States Attorney Donald W. Washington stated: “This investigation continues our efforts to strike at the heart of prominent drug trafficking organizations. Basaldua and his associates are part of a network of suppliers and traffickers that has created many drug addicts. They have peddled poisons that destroy or negatively impact lives, families and communities. Reducing the supply of illegal drugs to this community remains a priority of this office. We pledge to use every tool available to continue aggressive investigations and prosecute these drug trafficking organizations.”

Special Agent in Charge of the FBI’s New Orleans Division, David Welker, stated: “Today’s verdicts are reflective of the excellent working relationship of our law enforcement partners on the Safe Streets Task Force and the United States Attorney’s Office whose combined resources are dedicated to address violent crime.”

Sentencing for all defendants has been scheduled for April 16, 2009. Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statutes. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

This case was investigated by many members of the task force with lead investigators Shane Landry of the Iberia Parish Sheriff’s Office and Special Agent Doug Carr of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in addition to the assistance of the Louisiana State Police and the St. Martin Parish Sheriff’s Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys James T. McManus and Myers P. Namie.

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