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VILLE PLATTE, LA MAN SENTENCED IN FEDERAL COURT ON DRUGS AND FIREARMS CHARGES

Defendant receives 15 years in federal prison

LAKE CHARLES, LOUISIANA . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington announced that ZACHARY THOMAS, age 32, of Ville Platte, Louisiana, was sentenced this week by United States District Judge Patricia Minaldi for drugs and firearms charges. THOMAS was sentenced to a term of 15 years in federal prison and a term of 10 years supervised release following confinement. THOMAS received 10 years for the drug charge and 5 years for the firearms charge, which shall run consecutively, and a term of 5 years supervised release following confinement for each count, which shall run concurrently.

ZACHARY THOMAS was indicted in October 2008 on several drugs and firearms charges. THOMAS pled guilty in March 2009 to one (1) count of possession with the intent to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine and one (1) count of possession of firearms in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

According to the Factual Basis provided to the Court, in August 2008, officers with the Allen Parish Sheriff's Office went to THOMAS's residence to investigate alleged narcotics trafficking. Upon arrival at THOMAS's residence, it was evident that the smell of marijuana was emanating from within the residence. Upon entering the residence, after being invited inside by THOMAS, the officers could see marijuana in

plain view and informed THOMAS they were there to investigate allegations of drug trafficking being conducted from his home. THOMAS cooperated with the officers by agreeing to talk with them without an attorney present and proceeded to inform the officers that he had in his possession marijuana and crystal meth, along with several thousand dollars. Pursuant to THOMAS signing a voluntary consent to search form, the officers found narcotics where THOMAS had instructed them to look and located three additional locked boxes under his bed, containing 8 small bags of crystal meth (each weighing more than 1 oz.), money, ecstasy, somas, and jewelry. Also recovered, were four pistols and one shotgun that were test fired and found to be in working operation.

Sentencing in federal court is determined by the discretion of federal judges and the governing statute. United States Sentencing Guidelines established by the United States Congress and the United States Sentencing Commission are only used as guidelines by the judge in determining the appropriate sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system.

This case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Allen Parish Sheriff's Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney J. Collin Sims.

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