



U. S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
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15 DRUG TRAFFICKERS ARRESTED

Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force: Operation "Weed Whacker"

Shreveport, La.: Federal, state and local law enforcement agents began making arrests on Tuesday, March 29th, resulting from Operation: Weed Whacker, an 18-month investigation focused on individuals who were charged with conspiracy and drug trafficking violations. The arrests and unsealing of the indictment was announced today by United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley. Fifteen defendants were arrested while two still remain as fugitives.

An indictment was returned on January 26, 2011 by the Western District of Louisiana Federal Grand Jury, charging 17 individuals who were involved in the conspiracy and organized distribution of more than five kilograms of cocaine and more than 1,000 kilograms of marijuana in northwest Louisiana, Texas and Mississippi. The indictment is part of an 18-month investigation code named Operation: Weed Whacker conducted by the Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF), a joint federal, state and local law enforcement effort to dismantle major drug trafficking organizations. The case is one of the area's largest investigations into illegal drug trafficking.

United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley stated, "The OCDETF program is the nation's flagship effort to combat illegal drug trafficking, focusing on major supplies that cross state and national borders, and succeeds due to the cooperative effort of federal, state and local law enforcement agents. Our office continues to aggressively pursue these types of cases to deter this kind of illegal drug activity."

Special Agent in Charge of the U. S. Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) New Orleans Division, Jimmy S. Fox, III, stated, "Operation Weed Whacker is another example of how DEA collaborates with our law enforcement partners on the state and local levels to disrupt and dismantle drug trafficking organizations across multiple jurisdictions.

It's safe to say that this type of collaboration has far greater outreach that goes beyond the arrests and seizures in this investigation. We have prevented other crimes and possible addictions."

The 15 defendants arrested thus far will make initial appearances in federal court this week.

If convicted, all defendants face a maximum of life in prison, including a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, or both.

An indictment is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

This investigation was begun by the Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office, the Shreveport Police Department, and the Louisiana State Police, all working with the U. S. Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force. The case is being prosecuted by Lead OCDEF attorney, Assistant United States Attorney James G. Cowles, Jr.

The fugitives still at large are Frankie V. Jones and Ruben Manuel Flores. If anyone has information about these fugitives, please contact the DEA Office at 318-676-4080 and speak with Task Force Agent Rick Anderson.

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