



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2018
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Whitley County Man Sentenced to 300 Months for Armed Drug Trafficking

LONDON, Ky. — Edwin Willis, 44, of Corbin, Kentucky, was sentenced to 300 months (25 years) in federal prison, by United States District Judge Robert E. Wier, for conspiring to distribute methamphetamine and possessing a firearm in furtherance of that drug trafficking offense. Willis has three prior felony drug convictions and, as a result, qualified for career offender status and an enhanced sentence under federal law.

Willis pled guilty to the charges against him in March of 2018. Willis is the final defendant to be sentenced in an interstate drug conspiracy led by Marti Payne, through which pound levels of methamphetamine were imported from Georgia to Whitley and Laurel County, Kentucky between April of 2017 and August of 2017. The conspiracy concluded on August 1, 2017, when law enforcement arrested Payne and Willis. Willis's arrest followed a chase during which firearms were discarded from the vehicle. A subsequent search of that vehicle revealed that Willis was in possession of over 200 grams of methamphetamine. The investigation confirmed Willis, armed with a firearm, had traveled with Payne to Georgia to obtain methamphetamine.

Eleven others who participated in the conspiracy to obtain and distribute methamphetamine have previously pled guilty and were sentenced, including Marti Payne (160 months), Whitney Wright (93 months), Brandon Huff (118 months), Courtney Stacy (120 months), Jamieson Taylor Wayne Minton (92 months), Ethan Powers (93 months), Jamie Peters (124 months), David Russell (68 months), Christopher Jonas (160 months), Kenneth Buchanan (125 months), and Ladonna Ping (65 months). Under federal law, the defendants must serve 85 percent of their prison sentences; and upon their release, they will be under the supervision of the United States Probation Office.

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Stuart Lowrey, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives Special Agent in Charge for the Louisville Field Division; and Richard Sanders, Kentucky State Police Commissioner, jointly made the announcement. The Laurel County Sheriff's Office and the Williamsburg Police Department also assisted in the investigation. The United States was represented by Assistant United States Attorney Andrew H. Trimble.

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce violent crime and make our

neighborhoods safer for everyone. The PSN program was reinvigorated as part of the Department's renewed focus on targeting violent criminals, directing all U.S. Attorney's Offices to work in partnership with federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and the local community to develop effective, locally-based strategies to reduce violent crime.

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