



# Department of Justice

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## Knox County Man Convicted of Armed Methamphetamine Trafficking

**LONDON, Ky.** — A Corbin, Ky., man was convicted Friday, by a federal jury sitting in London, of armed methamphetamine trafficking and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

After two hours of deliberation, following a three-day trial, the jury convicted Helton of conspiracy to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine, possessing a firearm in furtherance of that conspiracy, possessing with the intent to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine, and possessing a firearm by convicted felon. The jury acquitted Helton of possessing a firearm found at his mother's residence.

The evidence at trial established that, on June 9, 2019, deputies with the Knox and Laurel County Sheriff's Offices searched the residence that Helton shared with his wife, Anita, seizing over 300 grams of crystal methamphetamine and four firearms, including three that were loaded. Helton then directed his wife to go to his mother's residence, to get money to bond him out of jail. When law enforcement searched that residence, they found over \$8,000 secreted in a closet. A search of a child's playhouse on the property revealed over 800 grams of additional crystal methamphetamine and another firearm. The Kentucky State Police had previously made a controlled purchase of methamphetamine that was arranged with Helton but delivered by his wife.

Anita Helton previously pled guilty to conspiring with Helton to distribute methamphetamine and possessing firearms in furtherance of that offense. Her sentencing is scheduled for November 17, 2020.

Helton is scheduled to be sentenced on January 5, 2021. He faces a statutory minimum of 20 years in prison. Under federal law, Helton must serve 85 percent of his sentence. Helton's minimum sentence was enhanced as a result of a previous felony conviction for manufacturing methamphetamine.

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Jeffrey T. Scott, Special Agent in Charge, DEA, Louisville Field Division; Rodney Brewer, Commissioner, Kentucky State Police; Sheriff Mike Smith, Knox County Sheriff's Department; and Sheriff John Root, Laurel County Sheriff's Department, jointly announced the verdict.

The investigation was conducted by the DEA, KSP, the Knox County Sheriff's Office,

and the Laurel County Sheriff's Office. The United States was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew H. Trimble.

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 Robert Duncan Jr., coordinates PSN efforts in cooperation with various federal, state, and local law enforcement officials.

This case is also part of Project Guardian, the Department of Justice's signature initiative to reduce gun violence and enforce federal firearms laws. Initiated by the Attorney General in the fall of 2019, Project Guardian draws upon the Department's past successful programs to reduce gun violence; enhances coordination of federal, state, local, and tribal authorities in investigating and prosecuting gun crimes; improves information-sharing by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives when a prohibited individual attempts to purchase a firearm and is denied by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), to include taking appropriate actions when a prospective purchaser is denied by the NICS for mental health reasons; and ensures that federal resources are directed at the criminals posing the greatest threat to our communities. Click [here](#) for more information about Project Guardian.

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