



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MONDAY, Nov. 22, 2021
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Mercer County Man Sentenced to 408 Months for Drug Trafficking and Possession of Firearm by Convicted Felon

LEXINGTON, Ky.— A Harrodsburg, Ky., man, John Michael Essex, 58, was sentenced to 408 months in federal prison on Friday, by Chief U.S. District Judge Danny C. Reeves, after being convicted of possession with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine, possession with intent to distribute heroin, and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

According to the evidence presented at trial, on July 7, 2019, deputies with the Mercer County Sheriff's Office executed a search warrant on a property being occupied and rented by Essex. During the search officers located approximately 354 grams of methamphetamine and 69 grams of a mixture of heroin and fentanyl, in multiple baggies packaged for distribution. A Remington rifle was also located in a vehicle belonging to the Essex. Essex had previously been convicted of a felony and was prohibited from possessing a firearm.

Essex was convicted in August 2021.

Under federal law, Essex must serve 85 percent of his prison sentence. Upon his release from prison, he will be under the supervision of the U.S. Probation Office for 10 years.

Carlton S. Shier, IV, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; J. Todd Scott, Special Agent in Charge, DEA, Louisville Field Office; and Sheriff Ernie Kelty, Mercer County Sheriff's Office; announced the sentence.

The investigation was conducted by DEA and the Mercer County Sheriff's Office, with assistance from the Danville Police Department, Lincoln County Sheriff's Office, and the Kentucky State Police Special Response Team. The United States was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Francisco Villalobos.

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, Acting U.S. Attorney Shier coordinates PSN efforts in cooperation with various federal, state, and local law enforcement officials.

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