

JACKSON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

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JACKSON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

Not every police department has the resources necessary to fight drug-related crimes—crimes that know no boundaries, crisscrossing city limits, county lines and state borders. The COMBAT-funded Jackson County Drug Task Force brings together detectives from the county's various police departments and Sheriff's Office to pursue drug dealers across these legal jurisdictions in a coordinated, concentrated and collaborative fashion.

In response to an emerging drug problem, the Jackson County Drug formed the Jackson County Drug Task Force in 1986 as a multi-jurisdictional investigative initiative. Throughout the 1980's, drug trafficking and an active drug culture were a part of daily life throughout Kansas City, Missouri, and much of Jackson County. Illicit drugs, openly traded on street corners such as crack cocaine, methamphetamine and PCP, was commonplace. Drug houses and methamphetamine labs sprung up throughout our county overnight. Initially funding for the Task Force was through private donations and one grant.

In 1989, Jackson County voters approved a new one-quarter of one-percent anti-drug sales tax, later known as the Community Backed Anti-Crime Tax (COMBAT). The tax would support a broad-based attack on drug abuse and drug-related violent crimes. One of the enforcement initiatives of COMBAT funding was the Jackson County Drug Task Force.

Renewed for seven-year periods in 1995, 2004, 2009 and 2016 the COMBAT tax now entirely funds the JCDTF, providing the Task Force with an adjusted budget of \$3,342,305 in 2023.

JACKSON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE MISSION

The County of Jackson has approximately 604.84 square miles. With a population of 700,307 according to the Census Bureau, Jackson County is the second most populous of Missouri's 114 counties, after St. Louis County. The Task Force's focus is Jackson County, which includes all suburban jurisdictions and unincorporated areas. The purpose of the Task Force is to provide a combined and unified response to the drug and narcotics related violent crime problem as it exists in Jackson County.

The Task Force participates with all federal, state and local Kansas City law enforcement agencies however, the primary investigative mission and focus continues to be in Jackson County and the outlying areas of the county, not adequately serviced by other law enforcement agencies. Task Force Detectives work in unison with other agencies' personnel assigned to the Task Force to investigate drug and violent crimes related to the illegal drug trade. These investigations range from Jackson County to anywhere in the continental United States. Task Force Detectives have specialty training in undercover operations, long-term investigations and covert surveillance techniques.

In 2023, the Task Force participated in multiple Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) operations in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Department of Homeland Security. These partnerships allowed the Task Force partial reimbursement for narcotics buy money and overtime costs associated with the OCDETF investigations. The Task Force was actively involved in five OCDETF investigations in 2023.

In 2011, the JCDTF signed with the Missouri National Guard to provide one Intelligence Analyst to assist with long-term investigations. This agreement continued in 2023.

A Task Force Detective obtained a high-level security clearance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation in order to assist in investigations involving large-scale Transnational Criminal Drug Organizations. Additionally, the Task Force is coordinating with the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Kansas City Metro Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Strike Force to address the increasing problem of violent crime and Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTO) with ties to Mexico. These Drug Trafficking Organizations have set up sophisticated distribution networks in Jackson County and are obtaining large amounts of illegal drugs from Mexican-based Drug Trafficking Organizations for distribution in Jackson County.

The Task Force collaborates with treatment providers, social workers, and other community stakeholders in utilizing referral networks and facilitate access to treatment for individuals encountered through the justice system. While law enforcement traditionally has focused on enforcement, increasingly it is recognized that alternative approaches can connect individuals with drug addiction disorders to treatment and support services. Effective strategies require collaboration, addressing root causes, and overcoming stigma and resource limitations.

In those efforts, the Task Force actively participates with "STRIVIN" the Community Backed Anti-Crime Tax (COMBAT) initiative to address violence in Jackson County's most vulnerable neighborhoods.

STRIVIN' hinges on collaboration and brings together educators, elected officials, law enforcement officers, family court administrators, social workers, mental health professionals, substance abuse counselors, faith-based leaders and concerned citizens to join forces, pool resources, provide services and find solutions. In working together, the STRIVIN initiative addresses the core issues triggering much of the violence in Jackson County's "hot spots".

JACKSON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE ORGANIZATION

The Jackson County Drug Task Force is a voluntary law enforcement organization that operates under the direction of an Executive Board comprised of representatives from fourteen (14) law enforcement agencies in Jackson County. Each of these law enforcement agencies signed an Agreement for Law Enforcement Services with the Task Force.

The Executive Board of the Task Force includes the Police Chiefs from each of the participating cities and the Sheriff of Jackson County. A representative from the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the Federal Bureau of Investigation attend the Executive Board meetings in a spirit of cooperation and coordination of investigative efforts.

Seven (7) of the participating law enforcement agencies and the Jackson County Sheriff's Office contribute or "loan" manpower to the Task Force. The Task Force reimburses all salaries, benefits, equipment and other associated costs with personnel assigned to the Task Force. Costs for reimbursement are paid from grants and funding generated by the countywide anti-crime sales tax (COMBAT).

In 2022, in order to provide a more combined and unified response to the drug and narcotic related violent crime problem in Independence the Detectives assigned to the Police Departments Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU) were co-located with the Task Force. The Task Force reimburses 50% of the salaries of those DEU Detectives. This partnership continues in 2023.

Participating agencies include:

- **Blue Springs Police** - 2 Investigators (1 vacant)
- **Buckner Police**
- **Grain Valley Police** – 1 Investigator
- **Grandview Police** - 1 Sergeant, 0 Investigator (2 vacant)
- **Greenwood Police**
- **Independence Police** – 1 Sergeant, 1 Investigators (4 vacant)
- **Jackson County** – 1 OIC, 1 Administrative, 1 Property/Evidence Officer
- **Jackson County Sheriff** – 2 Investigators (1 vacant)
- **Lake Lotawana Police**
- **Lee's Summit Police** – 1 Sergeant, 5 Investigators (1 vacant)
- **Lone Jack Police**
- **Missouri State Highway Patrol**
- **Oak Grove Police** - 1 Investigator
- **Raytown Police**
- **Sugar Creek Police** - 1 Investigator

Detectives co-located with the Task Force.

- **Independence Police Drug Enforcement Unit** – 4 Detectives

The Task Force also has two positions on loan from the following:

- **Missouri National Guard Counterdrug Program** – Analyst
- **The Department of Homeland Security** – 1 Special Agent (Part Time)

JACKSON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

K-9

In 2022, the Jackson County Drug Task Force added Harlow, a 2-year-old German shorthaired pointer, as a part of the Jackson County Drug Task Force team. The Missouri Police Canine Association (MPCA) certifies Harlow as a drug detection K-9 trained “alert” to a variety of illegal drugs and their derivatives.

Harlow has conducted 66 searches in 2023 including parcel interdiction with the Kansas City Missouri Police Department at various parcel distribution centers in the metropolitan area and parcel interdiction with the U.S Postal service. Additionally, Harlow has conducted multiple vehicle and residential searches for the Task Force and Police Departments across Jackson County.

With Harlow's MPCA certification a positive indication by Harlow can be used for probable cause in affidavits as probable cause when applying for state and federal search warrants.

KANSAS CITY METRO ORGANIZED CRIME DRUG ENFORCEMENT TASK FORCE STRIKE FORCE

The Jackson County Drug Task Force continued the partnership with the Kansas City Metro Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Strike Force (KCMSF). The Jackson County Drug Task Force is one of four local agencies participating in the KCMSF, along with the Kansas City, Missouri, and Kansas City, Kansas, police departments and the Kansas Bureau of Investigation. The Jackson County Drug Task Force will be joining forces with multiple federal agencies, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Drug Enforcement Administration; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms; the Department of Homeland Security; the Postal Inspection Service; and Internal Revenue Service.

The Kansas City metropolitan area is near the geographical center of the United States and at the intersection of several of the nation's busiest interstate highways, thus making it a major transit point for the transportation of drugs, firearms, and illicit proceeds to and from significant market areas across the country.

The KCMSF focus will be major criminal organizations, including criminal gangs, transnational drug cartels and other groups engaged in illicit activities that present a threat to public safety. The KCMSF will place special emphasis on addressing the significant methamphetamine threat identified in Jackson County and the Kansas City metropolitan area.

The KCMSF presents a united front against drug trafficking and violent crime throughout the metropolitan area coordinating agents and officers from both Missouri and Kansas with additional investigative resources to better protect our community from the violent scourge of drug trafficking.

Greater Kansas City joins these other metropolitan regions with Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force Strike Forces: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, El Paso, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, North Texas, Phoenix, Sacramento, San Diego, San Juan, southeast Michigan and Tampa.

NATIONAL INTEGRATED BALLISTICS IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

The Task Force established a program in which all recovered firearms will be test fired and the shell casings submitted into the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) with the Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBS).

NIBIN is a national network system administered by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) to assist law enforcement in solving firearms-related crimes. IBS is the collection of electronic images of ballistic evidence recovered from crime scenes and test-fired firearms recovered by law enforcement. IBS is a proven investigative and intelligence tool that can assist in the identification of leads that were not previously available, can link firearms evidence from multiple crimes committed with the same firearm and can link firearms evidence from a crime scene to a recovered firearm.

In June 2021, the Missouri Second Amendment Preservation Act (SAPA) became law dramatically decreasing the pursuit of firearm investigations and the purchase of illegal firearms in connection with controlled buys of illegal narcotics. Because of SAPA the Task Force is prohibited from test firing or submitting shell casings into the NIBIN system in 2023.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES SEIZED/PURCHASED

2023	Grams	Dose	Value
Methamphetamine	385,715.36		\$46,285,843
Cocaine	32,326.21		\$4,364,038
Cocaine – Crack	81.90		\$11,056
Heroin	980.00		\$196,000
Fentanyl	11,755		\$ 1,763,250
M-30 Pills		36,264	\$ 725,280
MDMA		754	\$12,818
PCP	11,350		\$1,645,750
OxyContin		1249.00	\$99,920
Hydrocodone		1249.00	\$24,980
Oxycodone		82	\$6,560
Prescription Drugs		117	\$1,170
Psilocybin Mushrooms	298.00		\$6,556
Marijuana	6,261		\$156,525
THX Wax	144.00		\$7,344

FIREARMS SEIZED/PURCHASED

Long Guns \$500 / each	Hand Guns \$400 / each	Machine Switches/ Machine Guns \$500 / each
70	80	5
\$35,000.00	\$32,000.00	\$2,500

EXPLOSIVES SEIZED

Explosive Actuated Devices	Explosive Materials	Explosives
		6

TOTAL VALUE OF ALL SEIZED CONTRABAND

Drug values based on adjusted street prices for illegal drugs 2020 Office of National Drug Control Policy Data

\$55,307,090.00

STATISTICS

	Cases Opened	Cases Closed	Search Warrants	Knock-n-Talks	Presentations	Narcotics Purchases	Money Recovered	Meth Labs Processed	Marijuana Grows Processed
2012	124	206	42	66	10	180	\$411,048	1	3
2013	119	206	92	30	21	408	\$275,876	0	3
2014	74	208	48	48	1	158	\$424,762	0	2
2015	127	199	58	82	1	218	\$330,372	0	1
2016	132	301	61	21	4	170	\$136,261	1	0
2017	92	114	50	10	9	140	\$135,475	0	0
2018	80	110	50	6	8	170	\$302,206	0	2
2019	76	204	54	12	3	123	\$216,246	0	0
2020	76	45	32	0	1	135	\$64,479	0	0
2021	112	192	51	7	1	138	\$733,749	0	1
2022	119	136	41	6	9	156	\$600,582	2	0
2023	110	94	61	12	2	165	\$1,305,207	4	0

CASE COMPARISON

	Total Cases Presented	Federal Cases	State Cases	Arrests	Warrant Arrests	Detectives Funded	Value of Seized Narcotics
2012	339	250	89	427		13	\$4,116,215
2013	205	128	65	177		11	\$7,568,018
2014	201	106	98	209		11	\$8,894,042
2015	216	122	82	262		12	\$6,530,240
2016	290	215	75	292	222	13	\$5,218,156
2017	213	166	47	269	200	11	\$13,461,484
2018	92	65	27	187	94	14	\$16,149,483
2019	204	172	35	228	106	13	\$30,451,473
2020	192	135	45	159	64	15	\$9,635,079
2021	192	161	31	268	218	16	\$14,984,084
2022	311	246	65	316	75	22	\$25,457,480
2023	109	56	53	229	120	22	\$55,307,090

PROSECUTION COMPARISON

Cases presented for prosecution

Federal											
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
250	128	106	122	215	166	65	172	135	161	246	56

State											
2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
89	65	98	82	75	47	27	35	45	31	65	53

2023 ANNUAL STATISTICS

QUARTERLY - ANNUAL	1st QUARTER TOTALS	2nd QUARTER TOTALS	3rd QUARTER TOTALS	4th QUARTER TOTALS	ANNUAL TOTALS
Operations / Events					
Drug Purchases	43	52	24	46	165
Drug Purchases (undercover)	38	19	16	29	102
Attempt Drug Purchases	14	13	3	7	37
Buy / Busts	3	4	2	2	11
Controlled Deliveries	3	6	3	1	13
Knock-n-Talks	2	1	8	1	12
Search Warrants	12	29	12	8	61
Pen Registers Established	0	0	0	1	1
Call Out / Agency Assist	43	53	36	28	160
Trash Pulls	4	2	11	4	21
GPS Trackers	2	4	1	39	46
Drug Trafficking Organization Case (DTO)	0	0	0	0	0
Presentations	1	0	0	1	2
Case With Analyst Support	0	7	0	0	7
STRIVIN Referrals	0	4	15	4	23
Drugs Seized Weights					
Methamphetamine (Grams)	13105.66	62707.47	56545.26	227099.20	359457.59
Cocaine Powder (Grams)	450.90	340.61	30.40	30004.00	30825.91
Cocaine - Crack (Grams)	0.00	0.00	24.00	56.00	80.00
Heroin (Grams)	0.00	9.30	0.00	12.70	22.00
Fentanyl (Grams)	6940.20	708.60	1976.70	1659.10	11284.60
M-30 (Units)	674.50	4791.09	438.00	818.00	6721.59
M-30 (Grams)	107.51	534.60	45.00	87.85	774.96
TOTAL Fentanyl/M-30 (Grams)	112.71	1243.20	2021.70	1746.95	5124.56
MDMA / Ecstasy (Units)	2.60	327.00	0.00	0.00	329.60
PCP (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
OxyContin (Tablets)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hydrocodone (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Oxycodone (Units)	77.00	0.00	5.00	0.00	82.00
Xanax (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Prescription Drugs (Units)	40.00	19.00	45.00	0.00	104.00
Psilocybin Mushrooms (Grams)	130.40	6.13	4.74	157.00	298.27
Marijuana (Grams)	575.40	2377.00	3045.70	262.60	6260.70
Marijuana Plants (Plants)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
THC Wax (Grams)	144.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	144.00
Edibles (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Vape Cartridges (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Drugs Purchased Weights					
Methamphetamine (Grams)	10033.00	5651.25	1169.90	9360.62	26214.77
Cocaine Powder (Grams)	57.30	405.00	29.70	1000.30	1492.30
Cocaine - Crack (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Heroin (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Fentanyl (Grams)	128.28	64.40	62.40	215.60	470.68
M-30 (Units)	16708.20	3466.00	306.00	6852.00	27332.20
M-30 (Grams)	1947.30	386.66	34.60	773.50	3142.06
TOTAL Fentanyl/M-30 (Grams)	2075.58	451.06	97.00	989.10	3612.74
MDMA / Ecstasy (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
PCP (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
OxyContin (Tablets)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hydrocodone (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Oxycodone (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Xanax (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Prescription Drugs (Units)	13.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	13.00
Psilocybin Mushrooms (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Marijuana (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Marijuana Plants (Plants)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
THC Wax (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Edibles (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Vape Cartridges (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Activity					
K9 Training (Hours)	1.00	0	16	36	53
K9 Searches	10.00	24	16	16	66
K9 Seizures	0.00	20	0	0	20
K9 Seizure - Methamphetamine (Grams)	40.00	3.00	0.00	0.00	43.00
K9 Seizure - Cocaine Powder (Grams)	8.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8.00
K9 Seizure - Cocaine - Crack (Grams)	0.00	1.90	0.00	0.00	1.90
K9 Seizure - Heroin (Grams)	958.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	958.00
K9 Seizure - Fentanyl (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Seizure - M-30 (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	2210.00	2210.00
K9 Seizure - M-30 (Grams)	0.00	3856.00	0.00	243.10	4099.10
TOTAL K9 Fentanyl/M-30 (Grams)	0.00	424.20	0.00	243.10	667.30
K9 Seizure - MDMA / Ecstasy (Units)	0.00	424.20	0.00	0.00	424.20
K9 Seizure - PCP (Grams)	11350.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11350.00
K9 Seizure - OxyContin (Tablets)	1248.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	1248.50
K9 Seizure - Hydrocodone (Units)	1248.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	1248.50
K9 Seizure - Oxycodone (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Seizure - Xanax (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Seizure - Prescription Drugs (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Seizure - Psilocybin Mushrooms (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Seizure - Marijuana (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Seizure - Marijuana Plants (Plants)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Seizure - THC Wax (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

K9 Seizure - Edibles (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Seizure - Vape Cartridges (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
K9 Seizure - Other	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
TOTAL DSPW/K9					
Methamphetamine (Grams)	23178.66	68361.72	49098.04	11361.62	385715.36
Cocaine Powder (Grams)	516.20	261.40	30.10	1000.30	32326.21
Cocaine - Crack (Grams)	0.00	1.90	0.00	0.00	81.90
Heroin (Grams)	958.00	9.30	0.00	0.00	980.00
Fentanyl (Grams)	7068.48	688.40	8.80	1615.50	11755.28
M-30 (Units)	17382.70	5209.00	194.00	8572.00	36263.79
M-30 (Grams)	2054.81	4434.29	18.20	953.65	8016.12
TOTAL Fentanyl/M-30 (Grams)	9123.28	1690.89	27.00	2569.15	9404.59
MDMA / Ecstasy (Units)	2.60	662.20	0.00	0.00	753.80
PCP (Grams)	11350.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11350.00
OxyContin (Tablets)	1248.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	1248.50
Hydrocodone (Units)	1248.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	1248.50
Oxycodone (Units)	77.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	82.00
Xanax (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Prescription Drugs (Units)	53.00	15.00	26.00	0.00	117.00
Psilocybin Mushrooms (Grams)	130.40	6.13	4.74	157.00	298.27
Marijuana (Grams)	575.40	0.00	923.40	95.30	6260.70
Marijuana Plants (Plants)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
THC Wax (Grams)	144.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	144.00
Edibles (Grams)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Vape Cartridges (Units)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Clan Labs / Grow Operations					
Methamphetamine Labs	0	0	4	0	4
Marijuana Grow Operations	0	0	0	0	0
Psilocybin Mushroom Grow Operations	0	0	0	0	0
Money Recovered / Seized	\$162,126.00	\$264,303.00	\$402,534.00	\$476,244.00	\$1,305,207.00
Money Spent on Informants	\$5,150.00	\$2,430.00	\$2,551.00	\$2,000.00	\$12,131.00
Money Spent on Drugs	\$83,641.00	\$71,180.00	\$12,430.00	\$55,900.00	\$223,151.00
Handguns Recovered	8	24	29	19	80
Long Guns Recovered	1	3	44	22	70
Machine Gun/MG Switches Recovered	1	3	0	1	5
TOTAL Guns Recovered	10	30	73	42	155

JACKSON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

2023

AWARDS

Drug Task Force Wins Two Awards

Peers Recognize Drug Task

Joe Loudon • COMBAT Communications Administrator

FRIDAY, JULY 21, 2023

“Contrary to their name and initial purpose, the Task Force has evolved into a true asset in overall crime reduction.”

— Independence Police Chief Adam Dustman

If you’re conducting undercover investigations, you can’t afford to have a spotlight shined on you. Therefore, even when the Jackson County Drug Task Force wins two awards, its officer-in-charge, Dan Cummings, is almost hesitant to accept.

“We are a covert law enforcement unit, which is A) the best way to investigate the crimes we do and B) the worst if you’re someone wanting a lot of credit,” Cummings said recently. “I certainly don’t want any photographs of my investigators. I still don’t like being photographed myself, but I guess I have to be the face—such as it is—of the Jackson County Drug Task Force.”

Cummings tried to shy away from the cameras when accepting, on behalf of the Task Force, first the Missouri Narcotics Officers Association (MNOA) 2022 Law Enforcement Unit of the Year award, then the U.S. Department of Justice’s 2022 Outstanding Investigative Effort award for the Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA). The Jackson County Drug Task Force has now earned the MNOA award six times in the last 12 years; Cummings was also named MNOA Law Enforcement Officer of the Year in 2014.



AWARD COLLECTION The Missouri Narcotics Officers Association awards the Jackson County Drug Task Force has earned in the last 12 years.

Despite these accolades, the Task Force remains a relatively well-kept secret in Jackson County.

“We don’t publicize everything we do,” said Cummings. “We can’t, and we don’t want to. Therefore, we aren’t that well known to the public we’re serving.”

‘A Force Multiplier’

The Task Force receives most of its funding from COMBAT, but actually was formed years before the anti-crime tax was originally passed in 1989. Today, detectives and other personnel from 12 Eastern Jackson County police departments and the Sheriff’s Office are assigned to the Task Force.

“The Task Force is a very valuable resource to the smaller (law enforcement) agencies in Jackson County that lack the resources to handle large-scale drug cases,” Lone Jack Police Chief Tim Cosner pointed out. “Many of these agencies sit on major highways or interstates that make them convenient locations to set up drug trafficking operations. Over the years the Jackson County Drug Task Force has assisted the Lone Jack Police Department with several situations where we lacked the resources needed to properly work a case.”

Grain Valley Police Chief Ed Turner said his department frequently calls on the Task Force: “They’re truly a force multiplier and allow the Grain Valley Police Department to better serve the citizens in our city.”

‘The Middle Of The Universe’

While providing crucial support for local police departments, the Drug Task Force has also, over the last several years, become a vital partner for federal law enforcement agencies seeking to disrupt the operations of Mexican cartels.

“We are in the middle of the universe, as far as drug trafficking in the United States is concerned—literally right in the middle,” Cummings said. “You’ve got I-35 running south to north, I-70 east to west. Shipments are going to come through Kansas City.

“You want to talk about organized crime?” he continued. “These are organized international operations.”



‘Constantly Evolving’

During the 1990s, the Task Force played an integral part in shutting down most local meth lab operations in Jackson County. At that time, those addicted to the drug would often run the labs, selling what meth they didn’t keep for personal use. The local supply for meth was disrupted, but cartels stepped in to meet the demand and, according to Cummings, “can produce meth on a grander scale than any local lab could have ever dreamt of—and for pennies on the dollar, comparatively.”

The cartels are “constantly evolving,” Cummings added, growing poppy to produce heroin and cannabis for ongoing illegal marijuana sales. But the most dangerous evolution so far has been the increasing use of the synthetic opioid fentanyl, which has become one of the leading causes of lethal overdoses in the United States.

“There are people who’d never shoot heroin into their veins or smoke pot or crack, but they will take an M30 pill,” Cummings said. “And it’s now more likely than not that pill will be laced with fentanyl. But we’re at a point where people are wanting fentanyl. They need it. They’re hooked on the potency.”

He stressed that often times “the frontline dealers are even sure if what they’re selling has fentanyl in it or not.”

JACKSON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE

2023

PRESS RELEASES

PRESS RELEASE

KC Man Sentenced to 20 Years for Meth Conspiracy, Illegal Firearms

Wednesday, January 4, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Kansas City, Mo., man was sentenced in federal court today for his role in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine and for illegally possessing firearms.

Richard Maples, 38, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Stephen R. Bough to 20 years in federal prison without parole.

On April 25, 2022, Maples pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine, one count of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime, and one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Maples admitted that he was involved in the distribution of at least five kilograms of methamphetamine during his involvement in the drug-trafficking conspiracy from 2017 to 2019.

Maples sold large quantities of methamphetamine to an undercover law enforcement officer on three separate occasions in March and April 2018. After selling 111 grams of methamphetamine to a co-defendant on March 26, 2018, law enforcement officers attempted to stop Maples but he fled at a high rate of speed and eluded them.

On May 14, 2018, Maples was arrested during a car stop while he was in possession of 251 grams of methamphetamine, a Springfield Armory XD-40, a Taurus PT-145, a Vulcan, and \$2,330 in cash that must be forfeited to the government. Maples was arrested again on June 18, 2019, at a hotel in Kansas City, Mo. He attempted to flee from officers in a stolen vehicle and struck light fixtures and a fence before disabling the vehicle. One of the pursuing police vehicles struck a parked vehicle. Inside the stolen vehicle, officers found methamphetamine, a firearm, and drug paraphernalia. Law enforcement officers also found 18 grams of methamphetamine, marijuana, and drug paraphernalia in his hotel room.

Under federal law, it is illegal for anyone who is convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. Maples has prior felony convictions for possessing a cocaine, resisting arrest, receiving stolen property, and burglary. He was on felony parole when he committed the crimes in this case. Maples also has 20 misdemeanor convictions that include stealing and stolen property offenses, traffic offenses, fleeing, and assault.

Maples is the fifth defendant to be sentenced in this case. Six co-defendants have pleaded guilty and await sentencing.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Matthew Moeder. It was investigated by the FBI and the Jackson County Drug Task Force.

Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force

This case is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

Updated January 4, 2023

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Missouri

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, January 23, 2023

KC Man Connected to Three Fentanyl Deaths Charged with Fentanyl Trafficking, Illegal Firearms

Officers Seized 17 Firearms, Including Two Machine Guns, Large Amount of Cash, Drugs
KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Kansas City, Mo., man with connections to at least three fentanyl overdose deaths in Belton, Mo., has been charged in federal court with possessing fentanyl to distribute and illegally possessing firearms after law enforcement officers found 17 firearms along with a large amount of cash and illegal drugs in his apartment.

Tiger Dean Draggoo, 22, was charged in a three-count criminal complaint that was filed under seal in the U.S. District Court in Kansas City, Mo., on Friday, Jan. 20. That complaint was unsealed and made public today following Draggoo's arrest and initial court appearance. Draggoo remains in federal custody pending a detention hearing that has not yet been scheduled.

The federal criminal complaint charges Draggoo with one count of possessing fentanyl with the intent to distribute, one count of possessing firearms, including machine guns, in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime, and one count of illegally possessing machine guns.

According to an affidavit filed in support of the federal criminal complaint, three Belton, Mo., teenagers who were associated with Draggoo died from acute fentanyl intoxication between Jan. 14 and Sept. 13, 2022. On at least three more occasions during that time, Belton police officers were called because a juvenile was under the influence of fentanyl (one of those juveniles, who turned 18 after being contacted by police officers, is among the three fentanyl deaths).

Law enforcement officers attempted to conduct a traffic stop on July 21, 2022, of the Dodge Charger Draggoo was driving near the south Kansas City apartment complex where Draggoo lived with his girlfriend. Draggoo refused to stop, according to the affidavit, and fled from the officers.

Officers were conducting surveillance at the apartment complex on Sept. 22, 2022, when Draggoo and another person left the apartment and got into a Jeep Renegade. Officers followed the Jeep and saw it commit numerous traffic violations while displaying erratic driving. A Jackson County sheriff's deputy attempted to conduct a traffic stop, but the vehicle fled from the deputy.

A few minutes later, the Jeep returned to the apartment complex and Draggoo and the other person entered the apartment. Draggoo carried a large laundry bag from the apartment and placed it in the backseat of the Jeep. When a Jackson County, Mo., sheriff's deputy drove into the parking lot, Draggoo ran back into the apartment building. When officers knocked on the door of Draggoo's apartment, the affidavit says, his girlfriend initially told them he wasn't there. After she allowed officers to enter the apartment, she admitted that Draggoo had run into the apartment and out the back door.

Officers searched the apartment and found 17 firearms, including two machine guns, ammunition of various calibers, \$246,769 in cash, a ballistic vest with plates, a money counter, numerous pills that contained fentanyl, eight suspected LSD tabs, and marijuana. The 17 firearms included a Del-Ton 5.56-caliber rifle (converted into a machine gun), a Glock switch (used to convert a Glock pistol into a machine gun), three Marlin .22-caliber rifles, a Norinco 7.62-caliber rifle, a Mosin-Nagant rifle, an Anderson Manufacturing AM-15 .223-caliber rifle, a Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun, an Armscorp USA .308-caliber rifle, a Century Arms 7.62-caliber rifle, a Herbert Schmidt .22-caliber revolver, a New England Firearms .22-caliber revolver, a Kimber 9mm pistol, a Glock 9mm pistol, a Sig Sauer 9mm pistol, and a Metro Arms .45-caliber pistol.

The charges contained in this complaint are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Brad K. Kavanaugh. It was investigated by the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Jackson County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the Cass County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the Belton, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Blue Springs Man Indicted for Fentanyl Conspiracy, Illegal Firearm

Tuesday, January 24, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Blue Springs, Mo., man was indicted by a federal grand jury today for his role in a conspiracy to distribute fentanyl.

Alan J. Flamenco, also known as “Pablo,” 23, was charged in an eight-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Kansas City, Mo.

Today’s indictment alleges that Flamenco participated in a conspiracy to distribute fentanyl in Jackson County, Mo., from May 5 to Nov. 21, 2022. Flamenco is also charged with four counts of distributing fentanyl and one count of possessing fentanyl with the intent to distribute.

The federal indictment also charges Flamenco with one count of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime. Flamenco allegedly was in possession of a Glock 9mm semi-automatic handgun on May 5, 2022.

The charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Brandon Gibson, who is a cross-designated prosecutor from the Missouri Attorney General’s office as part of the Safer Streets Initiative to combat violent crime. It was investigated by the Jackson County Drug Task Force and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

Updated January 24, 2023

PRESS RELEASE

KC Man Sentenced to 15 Years for Heroin, Meth Trafficking, Illegal Firearms

Wednesday, March 22, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Kansas City, Mo., was sentenced in federal court today on charges related to heroin and methamphetamine trafficking and to illegally possessing firearms.

Brian K. Tice, 58, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Gary A. Fenner to 15 years in federal prison without parole.

On July 20, 2022, Tice pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute heroin, two counts of possessing heroin with the intent to distribute, one count of possessing methamphetamine with the intent to distribute, one count of possessing firearms in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime, and one count of being a felon in possession of firearms.

Tice admitted that he received an Express Mail package from California on Feb. 18, 2022, that contained 393.26 grams of heroin. The package was intercepted by a postal inspector, who learned that Tice had been sent 20 similar packages from the same person in California over the previous year. Law enforcement officers set up a controlled delivery of the package to Tice's residence. When he brought the package inside and opened it, officers executed a search warrant at his residence.

Officers found a loaded Springfield Armory handgun, which was later determined to be stolen, and a loaded Smith & Wesson 9mm handgun on the bed where the controlled delivery parcel was located. Officers also found a Springfield Armory handgun and a Bryco .380-caliber handgun, which was later determined to be stolen, in the closet of the same bedroom. Officers also seized 115 grams of methamphetamine, two grams of crack cocaine, four cell phones and drug paraphernalia.

On March 5, 2022, law enforcement officers arrested Tice when he left a residence they had under surveillance. Officers searched Tice and the vehicle he was in, and seized 84 tablets of benzodiazepines, 69 tablets of Alprazolam, 108 tablets of Zolpidem Tartrate, 24 tablets of Hydrocone, and a vial that contained fentanyl.

Tice had earlier been stopped by a Jackson County sheriff's deputy, which is the basis for one of the heroin distribution counts. At about 11 p.m. on Sept. 5, 2019, Tice was driving a 2009 Volkswagen Jetta and made a left-hand turn onto Broadway from West 39th Street in Kansas City. The deputy braked to avoid a collision with the Jetta, which continued traveling north on Broadway down the middle of the street. The deputy stopped the vehicle and conducted a series of field sobriety tests, which Tice failed. The deputy arrested Tice for driving under the influence; during a search the deputy found two plastic bags that contained a total of 25 grams of heroin and \$3,762 in cash in Tice's pockets. The deputy also searched Tice's vehicle and found a grocery sack underneath the driver's seat that contained a plastic bag with approximately 91 grams of heroin.

Under federal law, it is illegal for anyone who has been convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. Tice has prior felony convictions for sale of a controlled substance and conspiracy to distribute five kilograms or more of cocaine.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Stefan C. Hughes. It was investigated by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Jackson County Drug Task Force and the Jackson County, Mo., Sheriff's Department.

Updated March 22, 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Two KCK Residents Indicted for Fentanyl Conspiracy

Thursday, March 23, 2023

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Kansas City, Kansas, man and woman have been indicted by a federal grand jury for their roles in a conspiracy to distribute fentanyl.

Alonso Alfredo Nunez, also known as "Bullet," 19, and Jaloany Garcia-Medina, also known as "J. Lo," 20, were charged in a four-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Kansas City, Mo., on March 14, 2023. They were arrested today and had their initial court appearance.

The federal indictment alleges that Nunez and Garcia-Medina participated in a conspiracy to distribute 400 grams or more of fentanyl from July 25 to Dec. 18, 2022. In addition to the conspiracy, Nunez and Garcia-Medina are also charged together in one count of distributing fentanyl. Garcia-Medina is also charged with two counts of distributing fentanyl.

The charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Trey Alford. It was investigated by the Jackson County Drug Task Force and the FBI.

Updated March 23, 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Mexican National Indicted for Meth Conspiracy, Illegal Firearms

Thursday, May 18, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Kansas City, Mo., man has been indicted by a federal grand jury for his role in a conspiracy to distribute more than 60 kilograms of methamphetamine and for illegally possessing firearms.

Juan Hernandez-Guzman, 30, a citizen of Mexico, was charged in a four-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Kansas City, Mo., on Wednesday, May 17. The indictment replaces a criminal complaint that was filed against Hernandez-Guzman on April 24, 2023, and includes additional counts.

The federal indictment alleges that Hernandez-Guzman participated in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine in Jackson County, Mo., from April 10 to April 23, 2023.

According to an affidavit filed in support of the original criminal complaint, police officers executed a search warrant at Hernandez-Guzman's residence on April 22, 2023. Officers found a loaded Glock .357-caliber handgun, which had been modified so that it was capable of firing automatically, and a loaded Glock 9mm handgun. Each of the handguns had an extended magazine loaded with 27 rounds of ammunition. Officers also seized a quantity of cash and several cell phones.

Officers also found 10.9 kilograms of methamphetamine inside a cardboard box in the back seat of a dark blue Tahoe, which Hernandez-Guzman was seen driving on several occasions. The vehicle also contained several handgun magazines and a quantity of cash.

The federal indictment also charges Hernandez-Guzman with one count of possessing methamphetamine with the intent to distribute, one count of possessing a machine gun in

furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime, and one count of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime.

The indictment also contains a forfeiture allegation, which would require Hernandez-Guzman to forfeit to the government any property obtained from the proceeds of the alleged violations, including \$13,048 that was seized by law enforcement officers during the execution of the search warrant, as well as a money judgment of \$634,800, which was obtained as a result of the drug-trafficking conspiracy and involved the distribution of more than 60 kilograms of methamphetamine with an average street price of \$300 per ounce.

The charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Byron H. Black. It was investigated by Homeland Security Investigations, the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department, and the Independence, Mo., Police Department.

KC Metro Strike Force

This prosecution was brought as a part of the Department of Justice's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) Co-located Strike Forces Initiative, which provides for the establishment of permanent multi-agency task force teams that work side-by-side in the same location. This co-located model enables agents from different agencies to collaborate on intelligence-driven, multi-jurisdictional operations against a continuum of priority targets and their affiliate illicit financial networks. These prosecutor-led co-located Strike Forces capitalize on the synergy created through the long-term relationships that can be forged by agents, analysts, and prosecutors who remain together over time, and they epitomize the model that has proven most effective in combating organized crime. The principal mission of the OCDETF program is to identify, disrupt, and dismantle the most serious drug trafficking organizations, transnational criminal organizations, and money laundering organizations that present a significant threat to the public safety, economic, or national security of the United States.

PRESS RELEASE

Grandview Man Sentenced for \$4.1 Million Meth Conspiracy

Friday, August 25, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

Conspiracy Linked to Two Murders, Distributed 400 Kilos of Meth

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Grandview, Mo., man was sentenced in federal court today for his role in a \$4.1 million drug-trafficking conspiracy, which is linked to two murders, and which distributed approximately 400 kilograms of methamphetamine in the Kansas City and St. Louis metropolitan areas.

Gerald Lee Ginnings, 43, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Greg Kays to 520 months in federal prison without parole. The court also ordered Ginnings to pay a money judgment of \$86,750.00, which represents the proceeds he received from the drug-trafficking conspiracy. That forfeiture amount is based on the defendants specific unlawful distribution of approximately 7 kilograms of methamphetamine, based on an average street sale price of \$500 per ounce. The overall conspiracy distributed at least 400 kilograms of methamphetamine in less than 2 years.

On Oct. 21, 2022, Ginnings pleaded guilty to participating in conspiracies to distribute methamphetamine and launder drug proceeds from Jan. 1, 2017, Sept. 1, 2018, to possessing a firearm in relation to a drug-trafficking crime, and to being a felon in possession of a firearm. Ginnings was arrested several times in 2018 in possession of methamphetamine and firearms.

The drug-trafficking organization with which Ginnings was associated was responsible for two murders. In August 2018, James Hampton was seized in St. Louis by members of the same drug-trafficking conspiracy that supplied Ginnings with methamphetamine, although Ginnings was not in

St. Louis, Mo., with this group when Hampton was seized. Hampton was seized because the drug conspiracy were convinced Hampton could help find the drugs and money stolen by co-conspirator David Richards. When they realized Hampton could not or would not help, Hampton was restrained and beaten. Hampton was then transported from St. Louis to Kansas City, in the trunk of his own car. Brittanie Broyles, who was with Hampton and witnessed him being beaten and restrained, was also taken to Kansas City, where she later sent text messages from a co-conspirator's phone she secreted of her plight to family and friends in St. Louis. They were unable to locate her before she was murdered.

On Aug. 6, 2018, Hampton's car and body were discovered burning in Bates City, Mo. On Aug. 8, 2018, Broyles's body was recovered near Super Flea in the Northeast area of Kansas City. She had been murdered by two gunshots to her head. Witnesses and video identified Ginnings being following by co-defendant Markus Michael A. Patterson, of Kansas City, Mo., in another co-conspirator's car as Ginnings drove Hampton's car to Bates City. Patterson was recently sentenced to 560 months on the same charges.

Under federal law, it is illegal for anyone involved in drug trafficking to possesses firearms related to that trafficking and it is also illegal for anyone who has been convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. Ginnings has prior felony convictions for statutory rape, failure to register as a sec offender, and numerous assaults and car thefts.

Ginnings is among 32 co-defendants who have pleaded guilty in this case and its companion case.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Bruce Rhoades and Robert M. Smith. It was investigated by the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department, the Sni Valley Fire Department, the Jackson, Lafayette, Buchanan, and Phelps County, Mo., Sheriff's Departments, the FBI, the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, and the St. James, Mo., Police Department.

Updated August 25, 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Federal Escapee Sentenced for Leading \$4.1 Million Meth Conspiracy

Tuesday, September 5, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

Conspiracy Linked to Two Murders, multiple assaults, and distribution of 400 Kilos of Meth

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Trevor Scott Sparks, a Kansas City, Missouri, federal defendant who escaped after trial and was recaptured, was sentenced in federal district court today for his role in leading a \$4.1 million heavily armed drug-trafficking conspiracy, and directing two kidnappings, both resulting in murders, and numerous assaults. The drug trafficking organization (DTO) Sparks led distributed approximately 400 kilograms of methamphetamine in the Kansas City and St. Louis metropolitan areas in 2017 and 2018.

Sparks, 34, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Greg Kays to life imprisonment, plus 60 months consecutive, in federal prison without parole on the drug, money, and gun charges, all consecutive to 33 months for the escape. The court also ordered Sparks to pay a money judgment of \$400,000.00, which represents the profits he received from the drug-trafficking conspiracy. That forfeiture amount is based on the unlawful distribution of approximately 100 kilograms of methamphetamine, based on an average street sale price of \$7,500.00 per kilogram, and an average cost to the DTO of \$3,500.00 a kilogram. Sparks and the co-conspirators he supplied are believed to have distributed approximately 400 kilograms of methamphetamine in less than 2 years.

On November 7th, 2022, Sparks was found guilty by a jury of all counts presented during the weeklong trial. The charges included participating in conspiracies to distribute methamphetamine and launder drug proceeds from January 1, 2017, to December 18, 2018, possessing firearms in relation to that drug-trafficking crime, and to being a felon in possession of firearms and ammunition. Sparks and several of his co-conspirators were arrested out of a residence on Smart Avenue in the Northeast area of Kansas

City, Missouri, on December 18, 2018. Located in that residence were numerous firearms, cocaine, methamphetamine, marijuana, United States currency, drug ledgers, and other indicia of drug trafficking. This is the same residence where at least two of the DTO related assaults occurred.

While no one was charged with nor convicted at trial of it, members of the Sparks DTO were found responsible at sentencing by the Court for two murders. In early August 2018, James "Old School" Hampton was seized in St. Louis by members of the Sparks DTO at the direction of Sparks. Hampton was seized because the drug conspiracy was convinced Hampton could help find the drugs and money stolen by co-conspirator David Richards. When they realized Hampton could not or would not help, Hampton was restrained, beaten, and tortured. Hampton was then kidnapped and transported from St. Louis to Kansas City in the trunk of his own car. Brittanie Broyles, who was with Hampton and witnessed him being beaten, tortured, restrained, and kidnapped, was also kidnapped and taken to Kansas City. Once in Kansas City, Hampton was left in the trunk of his car and he and his car were secreted in a co-conspirator's garage near the Smart residence. Broyles managed to obtain control of another co-conspirator's cellular telephone and surreptitiously send text messages to friends and family in St. Louis about her and "Old School's" plight. Once that was discovered by the DTO, Sparks directed the DTO to move from one hotel to another, thereby thwarting efforts to locate Broyles. Her friends and family and law enforcement were unable to locate her before she was murdered by members of the Sparks DTO.

On August 6, 2018, Hampton's car and body were discovered burning in Bates City, Missouri. This was after members of the DTO retrieved Hampton's car (and body) from the secreted location and Sparks directed them to take it and burn it because of the odor emanating from the vehicle and to destroy the evidence and Hampton's body. Witnesses and video identified Co-Defendant Gerald Lee Ginnings of Grandview, Missouri, being followed by Co-Defendant Markus Michael A. Patterson, of Kansas City, Missouri, in another co-conspirator's car, as Ginnings drove Hampton's car with his body in the trunk to Bates City, Missouri, where it was found by the Sni Valley Fire Department fully engulfed. Once they extinguished the flames, Hampton's desecrated body was found in what was left of the trunk. Sparks forgave a drug debt of Ginnings for this duty.

On August 8, 2018, Broyles's body was recovered near the Super Flea in the Northeast area of Kansas City, Missouri. She had been murdered by two gunshots to her head. While not charged nor convicted of it, the Court at sentencing found that witnesses and evidence implicated Sparks in ordering her killing because of what she knew about Hampton. Ginnings and Patterson were likewise implicated as the two responsible for this murder. Ginnings was sentenced August 25, 2023, to 520 months in federal prison on similar charges to Sparks. Co-Defendant Patterson was sentenced August 17, 2023, to 560 months on the same charges.

Under federal law, it is illegal for anyone involved in drug trafficking to possess firearms related to that trafficking and it is also illegal for anyone who has been convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. Sparks has prior felony convictions for robbery, drug offenses, and assault.

Sparks was the main defendant over two indictments with 32 co-defendants, all who have pleaded guilty and been sentenced in those two cases.

On December 6, 2022, Sparks and fellow federal inmate Sergio Perez-Martinez escaped the Cass County jail where they were being held for sentencing in their respective federal cases. On December 30, 2022, Sparks was apprehended in the Northeast area of Kansas City, Missouri. Also charged in that escape case was Perez-Martinez (still at large), Sparks' mother and stepfather, and another man, who was the co-conspirator that stored the car with Hampton in it. Sparks was also sentenced today for that escape to which he pled guilty on June 28, 2023.

These cases were prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Bruce Rhoades and Robert M. Smith. They were investigated by the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department, the Sni Valley Fire Department, the Jackson, Lafayette, Buchanan, Phelps, and Cass County, Mo., Sheriff's Departments, the FBI, the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, and the St. James, Mo., Police Department.

Updated September 5, 2023

Federal Indictment Unsealed Charging 15 Defendants in \$7.9 Million Dollar Conspiracy to Distribute Fentanyl and Methamphetamine

Friday, September 8, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A federal grand jury indicted 15 individuals for their roles in a conspiracy to distribute fentanyl and methamphetamine.

Jermel D. McCray, also known as "Bumpy," 28; Eric M. Duncan, 28; Jermon D. McCray, also known as "Crowe," 28; Devion M. Miles, also known as "Rooster," 21; Armeer M. Asad, also known as "Low," 33; Kyrie H. Fields, 28; Adonijah Q. Moody, 23; Gary T. Young, 31; Zamewick D. McCray, also known as "Buck," 30; Dollahead M. Finney, 21; Dawn M. Keating, 52; Makenna J. Glynn, 23; Clayton M. Hammons, 21; Brandon M. Kline, 25; and Chase R. McNichols, 25, were charged in a 63-count superseding indictment returned under seal by a federal grand jury in Kansas City, Mo., on September 6, 2023. The indictment was unsealed and made public yesterday upon the arrest and initial court appearances of 1 of the 15 defendants.

In addition to the drug-distribution conspiracy, Jermel McCray is charged with possession with intent to distribute fentanyl, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, possession with intent to distribute cocaine, possession of a machine gun in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, possession of a machine gun, and felon in possession of firearms.

Duncan is also charged with possession with intent to distribute fentanyl, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, distribution of fentanyl, distribution of methamphetamine, possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, possession of a machine gun in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, possession of a machine gun, and felon in possession of a firearm.

Jermon McCray, Zamewick McCray, and Miles are also charged with distribution of fentanyl.

Asad and Fields are also charged with distribution of fentanyl and distribution of heroin.

Moody is also charged with distribution of fentanyl, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, possession of a machine gun, and felon in possession of firearms.

Young is also charged with possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, possession with intent to distribute fentanyl, and felon in possession of firearms.

Finney is also charged with distribution of fentanyl, distribution of methamphetamine, possession of with intent to distribute fentanyl, possession of machine guns in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and possession of machine guns.

Glynn is also charged with possession with intent to distribute fentanyl.

Hammons is also charged with possession with intent to distribute THC, possession with intent to distribute marijuana, possession of firearms in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and possession of a machine gun.

McNichols is also charged with distribution of fentanyl and possession with intent to distribute fentanyl.

The superseding indictment also contains a forfeiture allegation that would require the defendants to forfeit to the government \$7,918,000, which represents the proceeds of the defendants' alleged drug-distribution conspiracy.

The charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations and are not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Robert Smith and Jeffrey Q. McCarther. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Kansas City, Missouri Police Department, the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Overland Park, Kansas Police Department, Independence, Missouri Police Department, the Gladstone, Missouri Police Department, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives, the Jackson County, Missouri Sheriff's Office, the Johnson County, Kansas Drug Task Force, the Blue Springs, Missouri Police Department, Hays, Kansas Police Department, the Olathe, Kansas Police Department, and the Kansas City, Kansas Police Department.

Updated September 8, 2023

KC Man Indicted After Officers Found 29 Firearms, Fentanyl and Meth

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Kansas City, Mo., man was indicted by a federal grand jury today after law enforcement officers found 29 firearms in his residence, along with significant amounts of fentanyl and methamphetamine.

Charles J. Dunne, 60, was charged in a three-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Kansas City, Mo. Today's indictment replaces a federal criminal complaint that was filed against Dunne on Sept. 20, 2023. Dunne remains in federal custody without bond.

Today's indictment charges Dunne with one count of possessing fentanyl and methamphetamine with the intent to distribute, one count of possessing firearms in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime, and one count of being a felon in possession of firearms.

Under federal law, it is illegal for anyone who has been convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. Dunne has multiple felony convictions including a prior federal felony conviction for conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine.

According to an affidavit filed in support of the original criminal complaint, law enforcement officers executed a search warrant at Dunne's residence on Sept. 19, 2023. Officers found a black backpack in Dunne's bedroom that contained 415.6 grams of powder fentanyl and 1.5782 kilograms of methamphetamine. Under the backpack, says the affidavit, officers found two handguns. Officers also found several other firearms in the bedroom, including a shotgun, an AR-15 rifle, and a sawed-off short-barreled shotgun.

In a second bedroom, according to the affidavit, officers found another large supply of firearms, including additional AR-15-style rifles, shotguns, hunting rifles and handguns. Officers found several more handguns in a third bedroom. Officers also found an additional 774.9 grams of a substance believed to be fentanyl. In total, officers found 29 firearms and approximately \$16,000 in cash.

During the search, the affidavit says, Dunne began to experience a medical emergency consistent with a fentanyl overdose. EMS responded and a total of 12 doses of naloxone were administered at the scene and during transport of Dunne to the hospital.

The charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Megan A. Baker. It was investigated by the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the FBI, and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Project Safe Neighborhoods

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 gun violence, and to make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. On May 26, 2021, the Department launched a violent crime reduction strategy strengthening PSN based on these core principles: fostering trust and legitimacy in our communities, supporting community-based organizations that help prevent violence from occurring in the first place, setting focused and strategic enforcement priorities, and measuring the results.

Updated October 18, 2023

KC Man Charged with Three Fentanyl Deaths, Illegal Firearms

Friday, September 29, 2023

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

Seven KC-Area Defendants Charged in Fentanyl Conspiracy

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Kansas City, Mo., man has been charged with three fentanyl overdose deaths in Belton, Mo., alongside six other metropolitan area residents indicted by a federal grand jury for their roles in a drug-trafficking conspiracy that included illegal firearms and money laundering.

Tiger Dean Draggoo, 23, his brother, Colt Justin Draggoo, 20, Jose Amparan, also known as "Lil Mex" and "Jose Garcia," 20, Luis Manuel Morales, also known as "Trulu," "Lulu," "Luis," and "Luis Mor," 23, all of Kansas City, Mo.; Andrew R.A. Williams, also known as "DrewB Grittin," 22, of Grandview, Mo.; Alexander D. Barnett, also known as "Alex" and "Cobra," 22, of Lee's Summit, Mo.; and Javier Armanmdo Alvarez, also known as "Mexxican," "Gomi," and "Gummi," 21, of Kansas City, Kan., were charged in a 13-count superseding indictment returned under seal by a federal grand jury in Kansas City, Mo., on Wednesday, Sept. 27. That indictment was unsealed and made public today upon the arrest and initial court appearances of Barnett and Morales. Colt Draggoo also was arrested today and will have an initial court appearance tomorrow.

The superseding indictment replaces the original indictment returned on Feb. 7, 2023, which only charged Tiger Draggoo, and includes additional charges and defendants.

The federal indictment charges Tiger Draggoo with three counts of distributing fentanyl resulting in death. Tiger Draggoo allegedly distributed fentanyl on Sept. 3, 2022, the use of which caused the death of another person. Tiger Draggoo allegedly distributed fentanyl between Aug. 22 and Sept. 13, 2022, the use of which caused the death of another person. Tiger Draggoo allegedly distributed fentanyl between Dec. 7 and 20, 2022, the use of which caused the death of another person.

According to an affidavit filed in support of the original criminal complaint that was filed against Draggoo on Jan. 23, 2023, three Belton teenagers who were associated with Draggoo died from acute fentanyl intoxication. On at least three more occasions, the affidavit says, Belton police officers were called because a juvenile was under the influence of fentanyl (one of those juveniles, who turned 18 after being contacted by police officers, is among the three fentanyl deaths).

The indictment alleges that all seven defendants participated in a conspiracy to distribute fentanyl from Dec. 1, 2021, to May 3, 2023. The indictment also alleges that Tiger Draggoo, Alvarez, Amparan, Morales and Williams participated in a money-laundering conspiracy.

Tiger Draggoo is also charged with one count of possessing fentanyl with the intent to distribute, one count of possessing firearms in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime, and one count of possessing an unregistered firearm. According to the indictment, Draggoo was in possession of a Jimenez Arms .380-caliber pistol, an Armscor .45-caliber pistol, a Taurus .357-caliber revolver, a Palmetto State Armory multi-caliber rifle, and a short-barreled Savage 12-gauge on Jan. 20, 2023. Those charges are related to Draggoo's arrest on the federal complaint. Officers seized the fentanyl and firearms from Draggoo's residence and vehicle when he was taken into custody.

Additionally, Tiger Draggoo is charged with one count of possessing fentanyl with the intent to distribute, one count of possessing firearms in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime, and one count of illegally possessing machine guns. Those charges were basis of the original criminal complaint filed against Draggoo.

According to an affidavit filed in support of that complaint, police officers were conducting surveillance at an apartment complex on Sept. 22, 2022, when Tiger and Colt Draggoo left the apartment and got into a Jeep Renegade. Officers followed the Jeep and saw it commit numerous traffic violations while displaying erratic driving. A Jackson County sheriff's deputy attempted to conduct a traffic stop, but the vehicle fled from the deputy.

A few minutes later, the Jeep returned to the apartment complex and Tiger and Colt Draggoo entered the apartment. Tiger Draggoo carried a large laundry bag from the apartment and placed it in the backseat of the Jeep. When a Jackson County, Mo., sheriff's deputy drove into the parking lot, Tiger Draggoo ran back into the apartment building. When officers knocked on the door of Tiger Draggoo's apartment, the affidavit says, his girlfriend initially told them he wasn't there. After she allowed officers to enter the apartment, she admitted that Tiger Draggoo had run into the apartment and out the back door.

Officers searched the apartment and found 17 firearms, including two machine guns, ammunition of various calibers, \$246,769 in cash, a ballistic vest with plates, a money counter, numerous pills that contained fentanyl, eight suspected LSD tabs, and marijuana. The 17 firearms included a Del-Ton 5.56-caliber rifle (converted into a machine gun), a Glock switch (used to convert a Glock pistol into a machine gun), three Marlin .22-caliber rifles, a Norinco 7.62-caliber rifle, a Mosin-Nagant rifle, an Anderson Manufacturing AM-15 .223-caliber rifle, a Mossberg 12-gauge shotgun, an Armscorp USA .308-caliber rifle, a Century Arms 7.62-caliber rifle, a Herbert Schmidt .22-caliber revolver, a New England Firearms .22-caliber revolver, a Kimber 9mm pistol, a Glock 9mm pistol, a Sig Sauer 9mm pistol, and a Metro Arms .45-caliber pistol.

Williams is also charged with one count of possessing fentanyl with the intent to distribute and one count of possessing firearms in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime. Williams allegedly was in

possession of a Springfield Armory 9mm semi-automatic handgun and a Girsan .45-caliber semi-automatic handgun on April 19, 2023.

The charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Brad K. Kavanaugh and Robert Smith. It was investigated by the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Belton, Mo., Police Department, the Raymore, Mo., Police Department, the Cass County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, and the FBI.

Updated September 29, 2023

Grandview Man Sentenced for \$4.1 Million Meth Conspiracy

Thursday, August 17, 2023

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For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

Conspiracy Linked to Two Murders, Distributed 400 Kilos of Meth

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Grandview, Mo., man was sentenced in federal court today for his role in a \$4.1 million drug-trafficking conspiracy, which is linked to two murders, and which distributed approximately 400 kilograms of methamphetamine in the Kansas City and St. Louis metropolitan areas.

Markus Michael A. Patterson, 40, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Greg Kays to 560 months in federal prison without parole. The court also ordered Patterson to pay a money judgment of \$15,000, which represents the proceeds he received from the drug-trafficking conspiracy. That forfeiture amount is based on the unlawful distribution of approximately 400 kilograms of methamphetamine, based on an average price of \$8,000 per kilogram.

On Oct. 24, 2022, Patterson pleaded guilty to participating in conspiracies to distribute methamphetamine and launder drug proceeds from Jan. 1, 2017, Sept. 1, 2018, to possessing a firearm in relation to a drug-trafficking crime, and to being a felon in possession of a firearm.

Patterson was arrested on Aug. 30, 2018, at a hotel in Phelps County, Mo. Officers found approximately one pound of methamphetamine (what remained from two pounds of methamphetamine Patterson brought to Phelps County from Kansas City, Mo.), \$8,742 in cash, and drug paraphernalia in Patterson's hotel room and car. The cash seized by officers was the proceeds of drug sales, which Patterson was supposed to return to his source in Kansas City.

The drug-trafficking organization with which Patterson was associated was responsible for two murders. In August 2018, James Hampton was seized by members of the same drug-trafficking conspiracy that supplied Patterson with the Phelps County methamphetamine. Patterson was in St. Louis, Mo., with this group when Hampton was seized. Hampton was seized because conspirators thought he could help find the drugs and money stolen by co-conspirator David Richards. When they realized Hampton could not or would not help, he was restrained and beaten. Hampton was then transported from St. Louis to Kansas City, in the trunk of his car. Brittanie Broyles, who was with Hampton and witnessed him being beaten and restrained, was also taken to Kansas City.

On Aug. 6, 2018, Hampton's car and body were discovered burning in Bates City, Mo. On Aug. 8, 2018, Broyles's body was recovered near Super Flea in the Northeast area of Kansas City. She had been murdered by two gunshots to her head. Witnesses and video identified Patterson following co-defendant Gerald Ginnings, 43, of Kansas City, Mo., in a co-conspirator's car as Ginnings drove Hampton's car to Bates City. Ginnings pleaded guilty on Friday, Oct. 21, to the same charges as Patterson and is scheduled to be sentenced on Aug. 25, 2023.

Under federal law, it is illegal for anyone who has been convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. Patterson has prior felony convictions for involuntary manslaughter, distributing a controlled substance, and tampering with physical evidence.

Patterson is among 32 co-defendants who have pleaded guilty in this case and its companion case.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Bruce Rhoades and Robert M. Smith. It was investigated by the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department, the Sni Valley Fire Department, the Jackson, Lafayette, Buchanan, and Phelps County, Mo., Sheriff's Departments, the FBI, the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, and the St. James, Mo., Police Department.

Updated August 17, 2023

KC Man Indicted After Officers Found 29 Firearms, Fentanyl and Meth

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Kansas City, Mo., man was indicted by a federal grand jury today after law enforcement officers found 29 firearms in his residence, along with significant amounts of fentanyl and methamphetamine.

Charles J. Dunne, 60, was charged in a three-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury in Kansas City, Mo. Today's indictment replaces a federal criminal complaint that was filed against Dunne on Sept. 20, 2023. Dunne remains in federal custody without bond.

Today's indictment charges Dunne with one count of possessing fentanyl and methamphetamine with the intent to distribute, one count of possessing firearms in furtherance of a drug-trafficking crime, and one count of being a felon in possession of firearms.

Under federal law, it is illegal for anyone who has been convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. Dunne has multiple felony convictions including a prior federal felony conviction for conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine.

According to an affidavit filed in support of the original criminal complaint, law enforcement officers executed a search warrant at Dunne's residence on Sept. 19, 2023. Officers found a black backpack in Dunne's bedroom that contained 415.6 grams of powder fentanyl and 1.5782 kilograms of methamphetamine. Under the backpack, says the affidavit, officers found two handguns. Officers also found several other firearms in the bedroom, including a shotgun, an AR-15 rifle, and a sawed-off short-barreled shotgun.

In a second bedroom, according to the affidavit, officers found another large supply of firearms, including additional AR-15-style rifles, shotguns, hunting rifles and handguns. Officers found several more handguns in a third bedroom. Officers also found an additional 774.9 grams of a substance believed to be fentanyl. In total, officers found 29 firearms and approximately \$16,000 in cash.

During the search, the affidavit says, Dunne began to experience a medical emergency consistent with a fentanyl overdose. EMS responded and a total of 12 doses of naloxone were administered at the scene and during transport of Dunne to the hospital.

The charges contained in this indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Megan A. Baker. It was investigated by the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the FBI, and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

Project Safe Neighborhoods

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 gun violence, and to make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. On May 26, 2021, the Department launched a violent crime reduction strategy strengthening PSN based on these core principles: fostering trust and legitimacy in our communities, supporting community-based organizations that help prevent violence from occurring in the first place, setting focused and strategic enforcement priorities, and measuring the results.

Updated October 18, 2023

KC Man Sentenced for Meth Conspiracy, Illegal Firearm

Tuesday, October 31, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – A Kansas City, Mo., man has been sentenced in federal court for his role in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine and for illegally possessing a firearm.

Ruben Chigo Paz, 27, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Greg Kays on Monday, Oct. 30, to 10 years in federal prison without parole.

On July 11, 2022, Paz pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine and heroin, and one count of conspiracy to commit money laundering.

Paz admitted that he is responsible for the distribution of more than 1.5 kilograms of methamphetamine during the conspiracy. Paz admitted that he sold a total of 1,314.49 grams of methamphetamine to a law enforcement confidential source from July 13 to Dec. 4, 2018. Paz was arrested at a residence in Kansas City, Mo., in which law enforcement officers found 37 pounds of methamphetamine, one pound of heroin, and a Zenith .45-caliber pistol with a magazine.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert M. Smith. It was investigated by the FBI, the Independence, Mo., Police Department, the Jackson County Drug Task Force, the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department, the Jackson County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, Homeland Security Investigations, and the U.S. Marshals Service.

Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force

This case is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

Updated October 31, 2023

Ozark Man Sentenced to 16 Years for Meth Conspiracy

Wednesday, November 29, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Missouri

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – An Ozark, Mo., man was sentenced in federal court today for his role in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

Jevn Todd Griffitt, 26, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Roseann Ketchmark to 16 years and eight months in federal prison without parole. The court also ordered Griffitt to forfeit to the government \$15,324, which represents the proceeds he obtained from the drug-trafficking conspiracy.

On Jan. 10, 2023, Griffitt pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine and one count of possessing methamphetamine with the intent to distribute. Griffitt conspired with co-defendants Christopher Richard Ward, 45, of Kansas City, Mo., and Paris Ready, 29, of Sperry, Oklahoma, to distribute methamphetamine from May 2 to Nov. 7, 2019.

Griffitt admitted that he purchased approximately 1.2 kilograms of methamphetamine from Ward for \$8,000 on Sept. 14, 2019. Griffitt also admitted that he sold firearms to Ward.

On Oct. 29, 2019, Griffitt sold a Beretta Stoeger Cougar 9mm handgun to an undercover officer, whom he met in Ozark, for \$300. Detectives with the Springfield, Mo., Police Department identified Griffitt as a passenger in a Chevrolet Silverado on Oct. 31, 2019, and Greene County, Mo., sheriff's deputies attempted to conduct a stop on Interstate 44. The Silverado fled and deputies pursued the vehicle into the Springfield city limits. The Silverado began travelling in the opposite direction of traffic and the pursuit was terminated. The Silverado was located after it was abandoned a short time later.

Throughout the pursuit, deputies saw Griffitt throwing purported methamphetamine out of the front passenger's window. Investigators recovered approximately 238 grams of methamphetamine from the roadway along the course of the vehicle pursuit. Officers found a blue nylon bag on the front passenger floorboard of the Silverado that contained an AR-15 magazine and other ammunition, miscellaneous AR-15 parts, an AR-15 armorers kit, drug paraphernalia, and \$74 in cash. Approximately 12 grams of methamphetamine was found on the front passenger floorboard and approximately 88 grams of methamphetamine was scattered throughout the truck and on the ground leading away from the front passenger's seat.

Ward was arrested on an outstanding state warrant by Jackson County, Mo., sheriff's deputies on Sept. 30, 2019. During the arrest, Ward attempted to flee from the deputies on foot but tripped and fell, which caused a Sig Sauer 9mm handgun to fall onto the ground. On the same day, the staff at a local hotel where Ward was staying found a black zippered case while cleaning his room. The case contained six plastic baggies with a total of 239 grams of methamphetamine. The case also contained a plastic bag with .9 grams of heroin.

Ward told investigators that he had purchased one pound (approximately 453.5 grams) of methamphetamine from his source two to three times each week for approximately one month. Ward said he sold Griffitt a kilogram of methamphetamine two or three times, and that Griffitt had provided him with three firearms. Ward said he traded one-half ounce of methamphetamine to Griffitt for the Sig Sauer 9mm handgun he possessed when he was arrested. Ward also admitted to several other instances in which he sold methamphetamine.

Both Ward and Ready pleaded guilty to their roles in the drug-trafficking conspiracy and have been sentenced. Ward was sentenced on Nov. 9, 2023, to 12 years and seven months in federal prison without parole. The court also ordered Ward to forfeit to the government \$39,960, which represents the proceeds he obtained from the drug-trafficking conspiracy. Ready was sentenced on April 18, 2023, to five years in federal prison without parole.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Trey Alford. It was investigated by the Jackson County Drug Task Force.

Updated November 29, 2023

JACKSON COUNTY DRUG TASK FORCE COMMITMENT

Jackson County is a primary market area for production, distribution and abuse of dangerous drugs. Although progress has been made in many areas, continued vigilance, enforcement, treatment and education are required. The Jackson County Drug Task Force will continue its successful tradition through community partnerships and a united, cooperative effort against illegal narcotics.

Although limited by financial and personnel constraints, the Jackson County Drug Task Force will continue to provide the citizens of these communities the professional service that they have come to deserve and expect. The members of this Task Force have made a commitment to this office, the law enforcement profession and the citizens of this community that no information concerning the illegal sales of narcotics will go without proper investigation. With that in mind, we will strive to continue to improve on the quality of service to this community.

The Jackson County Drug Task Force actively solicits tips and information regarding all illegal narcotics activity. Should the information be related to a jurisdiction outside of Jackson County, personnel from this office will assure that the information is passed on to the proper investigative agency. Individuals having information to pass on may contact this office through phone in complaints at 816-655-DRUG or through the TIPS hotline, 816-474-TIPS.