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**MAJOR INVESTIGATION IN WEST MEMPHIS RESULTS IN  
DOZENS OF DEFENDANTS CHARGED WITH MULTIPLE  
DRUG AND GUN CRIMES IN 25 INDICTMENTS**

WEST MEMPHIS—Patrick C. Harris, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, Matthew Barden, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Little Rock District Office of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), William McCrary, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, New Orleans Field Division, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, & Explosives (ATF), and Scott Ellington, Prosecuting Attorney for the Second Judicial District of Arkansas, announced today the simultaneous unsealing of 25 federal indictments charging 43 defendants in a major operation aimed at curbing drug trafficking and gun violence in West Memphis and Crittenden County. The indictments were returned by a federal grand jury on July 6, 2017 and July 11, 2017, and were unsealed today following a coordinated roundup of the charged defendants.

In total, including defendants charged in state courts, law enforcement obtained arrest warrants for 50 defendants, and arrested 26 individuals early Tuesday morning. Eleven defendants were already in state custody. Thirteen defendants, including 11 federal fugitives, remain at large.

“Drug and gun crime has been overrunning the entire Arkansas Delta for some time, and the epidemic has hit West Memphis and Crittenden County hard,” Harris said. “Law enforcement at all levels is committed to helping rid this community of drugs, and is working together to find and stop these criminals. Our collective goal is to return these communities to their law-abiding citizens. Today’s major operation is a huge step toward this goal, but know that our commitment to helping this part of the state will continue long after today.”

The Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation, named Money Don’t Sleep, began in 2015, with a goal to target steadily

increasing drug and gun crime in Crittenden County. Early Tuesday morning 200 law enforcement officers, including more than 300 tactical officers, helped execute the arrest warrants in a targeted takedown that resulted in the arrests of these defendants on multiple federal firearm and drug charges. Most of the defendants are residents of West Memphis (see attachment for complete list of defendants and charges).

“Nothing is more important than the safety and security of our communities,” said Stephen G. Azzam, Special Agent in Charge of DEA’s New Orleans Field Division, which includes the Eastern District of Arkansas. “This operation is one of the largest Domestic Cartel Initiative DEA has conducted and represents one of the most powerful attacks we have launched against a drug trafficking organization, having an immediate impact in this region. The resulting arrests clearly demonstrate the combined strength that federal, state and local law enforcement agencies bring to bear in the battle against these domestic cartels and strike a significant blow to their drug trafficking organizations. By working together, we are leveraging our respective resources and expertise to achieve results that we could not accomplish on our own. Our combined, concentrated efforts are making communities in West Memphis, Arkansas, and across the nation, safer by disrupting the flow of dangerous drugs to our neighborhoods.”

From September 2015 through May 2017, agents with the DEA and West Memphis Police Department coordinated more than 50 controlled purchases of controlled substances, resulting in the acquisition of more than six pounds of methamphetamine and 11 illegally possessed firearms, several of which were stolen. Also, more than 10 ounces of crack cocaine and 20 ounces of cocaine were purchased in the investigation. A majority of the 43 federal defendants are convicted felons, many with violent histories.

“The men and women of ATF are extremely proud of the outcome of today’s collaborative law enforcement efforts to make West Memphis and the surrounding areas of Crittenden County a safer place,” ATF Asst. Special Agent in Charge McCrary said. “ATF is committed to working with our partners to address the violence that plagues these communities.”

“I want to thank Chief Oakes and the West Memphis Police Department for their investment in time and willingness to work with our federal partners in bringing this operation to fruition,” Scott Ellington said. “I also want to thank the Arkansas State Police, Highway Police, and Arkansas Community Corrections for their assistance and manpower in today’s major operation. Our community is worth fighting for, and I believe in West Memphis and Crittenden County. Cleaning up this community begins with holding people accountable for their actions. Today, with the help of the DEA and other federal and state partners, we took a big step toward taking back our community from the criminals who choose to sell drugs and guns, rather than contribute to it in a positive manner.”

“Today, the West Memphis Police Department, along with federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, conducted an enforcement operation targeting violent drug traffickers operating in West Memphis,” West Memphis Police Captain Robert Langston said. “This operation was conducted by over 300 law enforcement personnel, with many of them coming from Little Rock, St. Louis, New Orleans, and Atlanta. The arrest of these violent drug dealers will make West Memphis a safer place for our citizens, said of the West Memphis Police Department.”

During the investigation, with assistance from the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, agents also intercepted more than six pounds of methamphetamine being sent to defendants through the mail.

“The U.S. Postal Inspection Service is committed to the safety and security of the mail, postal employees and customers through disruption of narcotics trafficking using the U.S. Mail,” Thomas L. Noyes, Inspector in Charge of the Fort Worth Division said. “I want to commend the U.S. Attorney’s Office, West Memphis Police Department, DEA and our law enforcement partners involved in this investigation for their tenacious efforts to prevent illegal substances and related violence from invading our neighborhoods.”

The counts in today’s unsealed indictments include conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine, distribution of methamphetamine, possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute crack cocaine and cocaine, possession with intent to distribute crack cocaine and cocaine, distribution of crack cocaine and cocaine, use of a firearm in relation to a drug trafficking crime, felon in possession of a firearm, felon in possession of ammunition, selling firearm to a felon, and theft of mail by a United States Postal Service employee. (See attached defendant/indictment list)

Those arrested today will be arraigned in federal court in Little Rock before United States Magistrate Judge Jerome T. Kearney beginning at 10 a.m. on Thursday.

The investigation was conducted by DEA, in partnership with the ATF, and the West Memphis Police Department. Tuesday’s arrest operation included the assistance of DEA, ATF, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Probation and Parole, United States Postal Inspection Service, United States Postal Service Office of Inspector General, United States Marshall Service, Arkansas Highway Police, Arkansas National Guard Counter Drug Unit, Arkansas State Police, Arkansas Community Corrections, and the West Memphis Police Department.

The 40 indictments are being prosecuted by a team of multiple Assistant United States Attorneys, headed by Liza Jane Brown and Michael Gordon. An indictment contains only allegations. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.