

Department of Justice

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OPERATION RESULTS IN FEDERAL INDICTMENT AGAINST 18 DEFENDANTS IN HEROIN DRUG TRAFFICKING CONSPIRACY

BATON ROUGE, LA – Acting United States Attorney Corey Amundson announced today the unsealing of a 39-page federal indictment charging 18 defendants in Operation Dirty Bird, an extensive federal, state, and local investigation aimed at dismantling a large scale heroin trafficking network based in Ascension Parish, Louisiana, and Houston, Texas.

The indictment charges significant drug trafficking, racketeering, firearm, and conspiracy charges. To date, investigative efforts have resulted in the seizure of over one and a half kilograms of heroin, substantial amounts of methamphetamine, crack cocaine, and oxycodone, seven firearms, over \$314,000 in drug proceeds, and three vehicles allegedly used in the drug trafficking venture: a 2013 Porsche 911, a Mercedes CLS550, and a GMC Hummer.

The charged defendants are listed below. They face significant terms of imprisonment, fines, and the forfeiture of proceeds from the illegal activity.

- **Jason Muse**, age 37, formerly of Prairieville, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; distribution of heroin; possession with intent to distribute 500 grams or more of heroin; felon in possession of a firearm; possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Santos Mosquera-Candelo**, age 63, formerly of Columbia, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Alexis Alberto Vener**, age 32, of Houston, Texas, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Aron Winter Mosquera-Castro**, age 22, of Houston, Texas, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful travel in aid of a racketeering enterprise, unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Fabio Zuniga-Caicedo**, age 37, of Houston, Texas, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful travel in aid of a racketeering enterprise, unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Marshall Ann Muse**, age 31, formerly of Prairieville, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.

- **Darwin A. Elphage**, age 38, of Gonzales, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; distribution of heroin; possession with intent to distribute heroin and cocaine base; felon in possession of a firearm; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Herman Jimmerson III**, age 33, of Gonzales, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Kevin Boudreaux**, age 47, of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Anthony Gerrod Miller**, age 38, of Geismar, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Nicholas Sean Fobbs**, age 28, of Gonzales, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Raymond Gerard Comeaux, Jr.**, age 26, of Donaldsonville, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Jablonski Hankton**, age 35, of Gonzales, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Jermaine Christopher Pleasant**, age 36, of Donaldsonville, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Michael L. Williams**, age 45, of Geismar, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Larry Earl Miles**, age 27, of Donaldsonville, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Derrick Christopher Mills**, age 27, of St. James, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.
- **Denmond L. Smith**, age 38, of St. James, Louisiana, is charged with conspiracy; unlawful use of communications facilities; and forfeiture.

Acting U.S. Attorney Amundson stated, “This indictment is aimed squarely at the heart of a drug trafficking organization allegedly responsible for spreading significant amounts of heroin and other illegal drugs throughout our district. Every community and every person deserves peace, security, and freedom from the tyranny of armed drug traffickers. This indictment seeks to advance that goal. The combined federal, state, and local effort, which resulted in the indictment, reflects once again the unified front against crime in this district. I greatly appreciate the tremendous dedication and hard work by the agents and prosecutors working on this important matter.”

Brad L. Byerley, Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s Baton Rouge District Office stated, “The abuse of heroin and other opioids is a serious problem in our community. All too often, this abuse leads to addiction, shattered lives, and even death. For the health and safety of our citizens, DEA and our law enforcement partners pursued this organization who preyed on the weak and addicted through the distribution of heroin. The resulting arrests further our efforts to prevent heroin trafficking from taking hold in our community.”

Ascension Parish Sheriff Jeff Wiley stated, “This case represents best practices in law enforcement which is utilizing all assets - federal and local. It is our hope that all of these heroin dealers are dealt with in the federal judicial system with the strongest of consequences.”

Antonio Pittman, Resident Agent-in-Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms’ Baton Rouge Field Office stated, “The Bureau of ATF is proud to work with federal, state, and local law enforcement, as well as the Middle District of Louisiana U.S. Attorney's Office on Operation Dirty Bird. Through successful collaborations such as this one, law enforcement continues to ensure the safety of our communities.”

This operation is being handled by the U.S. Attorney’s Office, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Baton Rouge City Police Department, the Ascension Parish Sheriff’s Office, the Iberville Parish Sheriff’s Office, the West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff’s Office, the East Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff’s Office, the Louisiana State Police, and the Gonzales Police Department. This matter is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Jennifer Kleinpeter, who also serves as a deputy criminal chief.

The investigation is another effort by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) Program that was established in 1982 to mount a comprehensive attack against organized drug traffickers. Today, the OCDETF Program is the centerpiece of the United States Attorney General’s drug strategy to reduce the availability of drugs by disrupting and dismantling major drug trafficking organizations and money laundering organizations and related criminal enterprises. The OCDETF Program operates nationwide and combines the resources and unique expertise of numerous federal, state, and local agencies in a coordinated attack against major drug trafficking and money laundering organizations.

NOTE: An indictment is an accusation by the Grand Jury. The defendants are presumed innocent until and unless adjudicated guilty at trial or through a guilty plea.

