

Feds Nab 19 In Drug, Firearm Counts

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Federal and local law enforcement agencies arrested 19 suspects today in Hickory, N.C. and the surrounding area charged with drug trafficking, illegal firearm possession and other federal offenses, announced Anne M. Tompkins, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina. Another nine individuals were arrested on state charges. U.S. Attorney Tompkins is joined in making today's announcement by Wayne L. Dixie, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Charlotte Field Division, Chief Tom Adkins of the Hickory Police Department (HPD); and James C. Gaither, Jr., District Attorney for Burke, Caldwell and Catawba Counties. The federal indictments were returned by a grand jury on October 15 and 16, 2013, but remained sealed until today's arrests. The investigation began in October 2012, targeting individuals who participated in illegal drug transactions and gun trafficking in and around Hickory. The seven-month anti-violence initiative resulted in the seizure of more than 80 firearms, including 53 handguns, 19 rifles, 10 shotguns and one short barrel shotgun. Law enforcement also seized more than 1,425 grams of narcotics, including over 1,125 grams of cocaine and more than 230 grams of marijuana, with a total street value of over \$55,000. In making today's announcement U.S. Attorney Tompkins stated, "This morning's arrest of 19 offenders is part of my office's ongoing effort to combat drug trafficking and gun violence throughout our district. The law enforcement partners who participated in this anti-violence initiative share a common goal: to fight and reduce violent drug crime by joining forces, so our citizens can reclaim their neighborhoods from drug dealers and put an end to the collateral violence that comes with drug and gun trafficking." "ATF will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to identify those individuals that contribute to the number of crime guns used in violent crime in the Hickory area. Violent gun crime is the scourge in our society and any contribution to illegal firearms trafficking cannot stand," said ATF Special Agent in Charge Wayne L. Dixie. "Our mandate is to do everything we lawfully can to allow the citizens of Hickory to live in a safe and secure environment without the fear of having needless violent crime as a part of their lives. We accept that mandate and today's law enforcement action should send that message loud and clear." "I am very proud of our local law-enforcement and agents and staff of the ATF who worked together to bring about this initiative. This is a major commitment of resources from the ATF for a city the size Hickory. These defendants will be prosecuted by both the U.S. Attorney's office and the 2th prosecutorial district. We intend to follow up on this excellent collaborative effort with aggressive prosecution," said James C. Gaither, Jr., District Attorney for the 25th Prosecutorial District, which encompasses Burke, Caldwell and Catawba counties. "Hickory Police Department is committed to making our community safe," said Chief of Police Tom Adkins. "HPD along with other area jurisdictions are members of the Catawba County Safe Communities Initiative, which directs law enforcement resources to reducing the violence and drugs in our communities. This focused investigation with ATF and our officers will have a lasting impact on reducing violence and taking drugs off the streets of Hickory and other communities in Catawba County."

The round-up was conducted by the ATF, U.S. Marshals Service, Hickory Police

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Department, Newton Police Department, Catawba County Sheriff's Office, Conover Police Department, and Longview Police Department. Those arrested include drug traffickers, members and associates of drug trafficking organizations, convicted felons, as well as several local gang members. The federal suspects arrested during the round-up were:

- Kadeem Jamal Albright, 21, address unknown.
- Marquice Tyrone Streeter, 25, of Hickory.
- Kianta Martese Davis, 21, of Conover, N.C.
- Keon Maurquie Gaither, 25, address unknown.
- Chaetaz Sean Clayton, 23, of Hickory.
- Tyree Dorian Rhinehardt, 21, of Hickory.
- Isreal Lerock Linebarger, 22, of Conover.
- Larry Jermaine Linebarger, 26, address unknown.
- Larry Elwood Steptoe, 33, address unknown.
- Jeffrey Lashaw Maddox 27, address unknown.
- Anthony Roger Mull, 28, of Hickory.
- Kenneth Demond Norman, 35, of Hickory.
- Eric Jay Ramirez, 33, of Hickory.
- Cortez Lamar Rogers, 31, address unknown.
- Dorrian Debrell Shuford, 20, of Newton, N.C.
- Traquon Rashaad Davis, 20, of Conover.
- Brandon Jaqwan Sifford, 22, of Hickory.
- Anthony Lamar Mason, 24, of Hickory.
- Donnell Lavon Thomas, 39, of Hickory.

Nine additional defendants currently in state custody on state violations have been charged with federal offenses in connection with this investigation, bringing the total number of those charged federally to 28. They are:

- Damion Jordan Armstrong, 22, address unknown.
- Xavier Ahmad Cade, 22, of Hickory.
- Brandon Colbert, 26, of Hickory.
- Kerston Deshawn Edwards, 24, of Lincolnton, N.C.
- William Shalon Linebarger, 27, address unknown.
- Kenteze Rayvon Martin, 23, of Shelby, N.C.
- Christopher Durand Myers, 34, address unknown.
- Donald Lavar Ramseur, 24, of Hickory.
- Paris Michael Thompson, 24, address unknown.

Another nine defendants arrested this morning face state criminal charges. The federal

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defendants arrested today are currently in federal custody. Their initial appearances were held in U.S. District Court before U.S. Magistrate Judge David C. Keesler. The charges contained in the indictments are allegations. The defendants are presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law. The investigation is being conducted by the ATF and Hickory PD. U.S. Attorney Tompkins thanked all the law enforcement agencies involved in today's round-up for their assistance in making today's arrests. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jennifer Dillon of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Charlotte is leading the prosecution.