

### 30 From Area Netted in Federal Meth & Guns Ring; Reward Offered for Trade TN Man

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Thirty men and women have been charged to date with methamphetamine trafficking and firearms offenses as a result of Operation "Dixie Crystal," announced Anne M. Tompkins, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina. To date, 17 defendants have pleaded guilty to the charges. Operation "Dixie Crystal" is a joint drug task force operation which began in 2012, targeting significant methamphetamine traffickers in Ashe, Allegheny, Caldwell, Watauga, Wilkes Counties, and Johnson County in Tennessee.

"The success of this investigation speaks of the continued dedication of our local, state and federal law enforcement partners in targeting and dismantling meth distribution rings that profit by spreading their poison in our communities. Strong partnerships such as this one underscore the power of our combined forces and demonstrate our collective impact on the war

against meth," said U.S. Attorney Tompkins. According to filed court documents and court proceedings, beginning in 2003 and

continuing to the present, the co-conspirators have sold more than 200 pounds of methamphetamine, with a street value of more than \$4,000,000. Over the course of the investigation, law enforcement seized approximately 30 firearms, five vehicles, 20 pounds of methamphetamine, and \$150,000 in U.S. currency.

Federal criminal indictments unsealed today in U.S. District Court have charged the following 10 defendants with federal drug charges and related offenses:

1. Larry Mitchell Snyder, 59, of Trade, Tenn., is charged with a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life. He was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013. Snyder is currently a fugitive in the case and a warrant for his arrest remains outstanding. A reward is available for information leading to Snyder's arrest. Tips can be called in to 1-866-DHS-2-ICE (1-866-347-2423). All tipsters will remain anonymous.
2. Earl Butler Potter, 55, of Todd, N.C., is charged with a drug trafficking offense that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. He has been in custody since his arrest on July 11, 2012. He was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013.
3. Stephanie Lynn Shatley, 31, of Lansing, N.C., is charged with a drug trafficking offense that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. Shatley was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013. She is currently in state custody.
4. Jared William Pardue, 33, of Zionville, N.C., is charged with a drug trafficking offense that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. Pardue was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013. He has been in federal custody on June 25, 2013.
5. Tawana M. Sparks, 31, of Hudson, N.C., is charged with a drug trafficking offense that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. She was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013 and has been in federal custody since July 11, 2013.
6. Courtney Wayne Patterson, 28, of Todd, is charged with drug trafficking and firearms offenses that carry a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years to life in prison. He has been in custody since his arrest on July 11, 2012, and was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013.
7. Deborah Phillips Lewis, 36, of Todd, is charged with drug trafficking and firearms offenses which carry a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years to life in prison. She has

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been in custody since her arrest on July 11, 2012, and was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013.

8. James Foy Parsons, 45, of West Jefferson, N.C., is charged with a drug trafficking offense that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life. He has been in custody since his arrest on July 11, 2012. He was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013.

9. Tina Ann Wheeler (a/k/a Tina Ann Miller), 38, of Crumpler, N.C., is charged with a drug trafficking offense that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. She has been in custody since her arrest on July 11, 2012. She was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013.

10. Ricky Allen Latham, 32, of Creston, N.C., is charged with a drug trafficking offense that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. He was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 18, 2013, and is not yet in custody.

Three additional defendants facing federal drug charges are currently scheduled for trial:

Mauricio "Mario" Baltazar, 20, of Lake City, Ga., is charged with four counts of drug trafficking and firearms offenses that carry a mandatory minimum sentence of 40 years to life in prison. Baltazar has been in custody since his arrest on April 23, 2013, and was indicted by a federal grand jury on May 22, 2013. His trial is set for July 2013.

Kenneth Herman Bennett, 50, of West Jefferson, is charged with a drug trafficking offense that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years to life in prison. He has been in custody since his arrest on April 20, 2013. He was indicted by a federal grand jury on May 22, 2013. Bennett's trial is set for July 2013.

Martin Martinez Saldana, 43, of West Jefferson, is charged with drug trafficking and firearms offenses that carry a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years to life in prison.

Saldana has been in custody since his arrest and indictment on December 13, 2012, and has a September 2013 trial date. The following 17 defendants have entered guilty pleas and are awaiting sentencing:

1. Jason Michael Benfield, 33, of Laurel Springs, N.C., pleaded guilty on June 6, 2013, to drug trafficking and firearm offenses that carry a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years to life in prison. Benfield has been in custody since his arrest on March 22, 2013.

2. Ernest Monroe Parlier, Jr., 28, of Crumpler, pleaded guilty on May 16, 2013, to drug trafficking and firearm offenses that carry a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years to life in prison. Parlier has been in custody since his arrest on March 21, 2013.

3. Jeremy Keith Nunnenkamp, 40, of North Wilkesboro, N.C., pleaded guilty on June 5, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. He has been in custody since his arrest on April 20, 2013.

4. Jeffrey Dale Watson, 41, of Fleetwood, N.C., has agreed to plead guilty to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. Watson has been released on bond. A plea hearing date has not been set yet.

5. James Thomas Hawkins, 39, of Laurel Springs, N.C., has agreed to plead guilty to a drug trafficking charge which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. Hawkins has been released on bond since April 23, 2013. A plea hearing date has not been set yet.

6. Chad Morgan Yates, 38, of Chattahoochee Hills, Ga., pleaded guilty on May 17, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. He is currently in federal custody.

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7. Christy Lee Latham, 36, of Warrensville, N.C., pleaded guilty on June 19, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. She has been in custody since entry of her guilty plea.
  8. Melanie Virginia Osley, 37, of Chattahoochie Hills, Tenn., pleaded guilty on June 11, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. Osley has been in custody on the federal charges since her arrest on March 21, 2013.
  9. Luis Enrique Garcia, 46, of Mexico, pleaded guilty on February 4, 2013, to drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. Garcia has been in custody since his arrest on the federal charges on December 20, 2012.
  10. Jose Francisco Jimenez Pina, 46, of Mexico, pleaded guilty on February 20, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. He has been in custody since his arrest on the federal charges on December 13, 2012.
  11. Jose Humberto Jimenez Pina, 25, of Mexico, pleaded guilty on February 20, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. He has been in custody since his arrest on the federal charges on December 13, 2012.
  12. Bobby Giles Shore, 59, of Lansing, pleaded guilty on February 22, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. Shore has been in custody since his arrest on the federal charges on December 13, 2012.
  13. Danny Eller, 53, of West Jefferson, pleaded guilty on April 16, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. Eller has been in custody since his arrest on the federal charges on December 13, 2012.
  14. Cristie Aldridge Dollar, 45, of Foscoe, N.C., pleaded guilty on April 3, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. She has been in custody since her arrest on the federal charges on December 19, 2012.
  15. Pamela Ann Corum, 31, of Zionville, pleaded guilty on February 13, 2013, to a drug trafficking charge that carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years to life in prison. She has been in custody since her arrest on the federal charges on December 19, 2012.
  16. Tammy Wynette Woody, 43, of West Jefferson, pleaded guilty on May 15, 2013, to a bill of information charging her with a single drug trafficking offense which carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years to 40 years in prison. Woody has been in custody since her arrest on April 22, 2013.
  17. Javier Sanchez Chavez, 32, of Mexico, pleaded guilty on March 21, 2013, to a charge of misprision of a felony, which carries a maximum sentence of 3 years in prison. He has been in custody since his arrest on the federal charges on December 20, 2012.
- In making today's announcement, U.S. Attorney Tompkins recognized the following federal, state and local agencies which partnered in Operation Dixie Crystal, and thanked them for their continued cooperation and support:
- Brock D. Nicholson, Special Agent in Charge of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Georgia and the Carolinas; Harry S. Sommers, Special Agent in Charge of the Atlanta Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), which oversees the Charlotte District Office; Wayne L. Dixie, Special Agent in Charge of the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Charlotte Field Division; Greg McLeod, Director of the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (NC SBI); Sheriff James Williams of the Ashe County Sheriff's Office; Sheriff David Edwards of the Allegheny County Sheriff's Office; Chief Dana

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Crawford of the Boone Police Department; Sheriff Alan C. Jones of the Caldwell County Sheriff's Office; Sheriff Len D. Hagaman of the Watauga County Sheriff's Office; Sheriff Chris Shew of the Wilkes County Sheriff's Office; and Sheriff Mike Reece of the Johnson County Sheriff's Office in Tennessee.

The investigation is ongoing. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven R. Kaufman of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Charlotte.