



Department of Justice

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LEAD DEFENDANT SENTENCED IN GEORGIA'S LARGEST ECSTASY MANUFACTURING CASE

Marc Noblitt Sentenced After Recapture and Extradition From Germany

Atlanta, GA - MARC EUGENE NOBLITT, 39, formerly of Riverdale, Georgia, was sentenced Monday by United States District Judge Clarence Cooper for orchestrating the largest ecstasy manufacturing operation prosecuted in Georgia. Overall, the manufacturing conspiracy established and operated at least seven ecstasy laboratories in the Atlanta area starting in 1998 and continuing until the organization was dismantled by federal agents in November 2003.

"This is the first prosecution of this kind in Georgia, and one of the few instances in the entire Southeastern United States where drug dealers manufactured their own ecstasy," said David E. Nahmias. "It's a difficult chemical process that requires a high level of sophistication to complete. It's rare to find a single ecstasy lab, and this group had several operating at once. This prosecution involves some intelligent, highly-educated young people who used their college degrees to unleash a dangerous, addictive drug on the community," Nahmias said. "The case also shows that drug dealers cannot run and hide to avoid being prosecuted, as we will find them and bring them to justice."

NOBLITT was sentenced to 21 years and 10 months in prison to be followed by five years of supervised release, and fined \$5,000 to pay for the costs of his extradition from Germany. NOBLITT was convicted of these charges on February 22, 2007.

According to Nahmias and the information presented in court: The identified and charged ringleaders of the ecstasy operation were NOBLITT and MICHAEL OGBURN, of Atlanta. OGBURN committed suicide after his arrest in November 2003. NOBLITT cut off an electronic monitoring bracelet and jumped bond before his trial was to begin in February 2005. He was recaptured on April 22, 2006, in Cologne, Germany, and extradited back to the United States, where he entered a non-negotiated plea of guilty on February 22, 2007. With the exception of NOBLITT all the remaining defendants had entered guilty pleas and were sentenced in 2005.

NOBLITT and OGBURN began manufacturing ecstasy in small laboratories inside residences in Atlanta and in smaller towns outside the city such as Jonesboro, and Rex, Georgia, from 1998 through 2001. Afterward, NOBLITT and OGBURN discovered it was more lucrative to train others to establish ecstasy laboratories on their behalf and obtain the finished product at a discount. Through all the labs, NOBLITT and OGBURN's organization manufactured an estimated 44 kilograms of ecstasy, which was then packed into gelatin capsules or pressed into tablets and distributed in Atlanta and elsewhere. At the close of the investigation in 2003, agents busted two laboratories operated by individuals who were manufacturing ecstasy for distribution by NOBLITT and OGBURN; these laboratories were operating inside residential homes in Buckhead and Barnesville, Georgia. These laboratories contained enough chemicals and equipment to manufacture an additional 10-20 kilograms of ecstasy powder.

According to the evidence, the discovery of the Barnesville lab was key to the prosecution of the case. On September 16, 2003, drug investigators working for the Lamar County, Georgia, Sheriff's Department and the Georgia Bureau of Investigation received a complaint from a neighbor about unusual odors coming from a house in Barnesville, Georgia. The agents searched the house and discovered a functioning ecstasy laboratory, described by DEA as the largest in Georgia history. Agents arrested ADAM MORTON, 28, of Atlanta, Georgia, in connection with that laboratory, and the investigation immediately tied the lab to NOBLITT and OGBURN. Four months later, in January 2004, agents busted another operating lab tied to the organization, located in house at 25 Lakeland Drive, which sits in a residential neighborhood in Buckhead just off Roswell Road.

Taken together, the laboratories manufactured enough ecstasy to make almost 600,000 ecstasy tablets, with a street value of approximately \$10 million.

The evidence showed that the NOBLITT and OGBURN organization benefitted from a surge in the popularity of ecstasy among club-going young adults in the late 1990's. The surge in ecstasy use coincided with a growth in the popularity of rave parties and dance clubs in Atlanta and across the United States.

The investigation showed that NOBLITT first initiated the plan to manufacture ecstasy with a high school friend, HOWARD BRADSHAW, 37, of Atlanta, who had earned a chemistry degree from Georgia Tech. NOBLITT later taught the procedure for manufacturing ecstasy to ALVIN CHOI, 30, of Atlanta, who graduated with a chemistry degree from Emory University. BRADSHAW and CHOI both entered guilty pleas in the case in 2005.

The investigation showed that in July 2001, OGBURN and NOBLITT were manufacturing ecstasy in the basement of NOBLITT's residence in Riverdale when a container of chemicals exploded in OGBURN's face. Investigators obtained hospital

records showing that OGBURN received treatment for serious burns and lacerations on his face and arms.

In addition, the investigation showed that in November 2001, OGBURN was the victim of a home invasion robbery committed by members of the “Diablos” gang, which targeted high-level drug dealers for robberies while wearing Fulton County Deputy Sheriff uniforms. During the robbery, members of the Diablos gang handcuffed and beat OGBURN, locked him inside a closet, and stole \$30,000 in cash and two kilograms of ecstasy powder. The members of the Diablos gang later were arrested and prosecuted by the Atlanta U.S. Attorney’s Office.

Other defendants already sentenced in the case include:

ADAM MORTON, 28, of Atlanta Georgia, seven years and five months in prison (sentenced in Macon, Georgia); JEFFREY ANDERSON, 37, of Atlanta, Georgia, five years in prison; RAYMOND RAWLS, 28, Atlanta, Georgia, seven years, one month in prison; SCOTT LASSITER, 32, of Atlanta, four years and nine months in prison; TORRE SEATON, 33, Smyrna, Georgia, two years and six months in prison; JOHN MASKEW, 26, of Lawrenceville, Georgia, three years, one months in prison; JOEY LEE, 37, of Kennesaw, Georgia, two years, three months in prison; ALVIN CHOI, 30, of Atlanta, Georgia, three years of probation; HOWARD BRADSHAW, 37, of Atlanta, three years of probation.

United States Attorney Nahmias urged any citizens who have any information regarding the manufacturing of ecstasy or other illegal drugs to contact the Drug Enforcement Administration immediately. The U.S. Attorney's Office in Atlanta recommends parents and children learn about the dangers of drugs at the following web site: www.justthinktwice.com.

The case was investigated through a joint effort by the Drug Enforcement Administration; City of Alpharetta Police Department; Lamar County Sheriff’s Department, Georgia Bureau of Investigation, Atlanta Police Department, the Marietta-Cobb-Smyrna Drug Task Force, and the United States Marshal’s Service.

Assistant United States Attorney John Horn prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.