



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill
Middle District of Florida

Tampa

Orlando

Jacksonville

Fort Myers

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: STEVE COLE

October 1, 2008

PHONE: (813) 274-6136

<http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/flm/pr>

FAX: (813) 274-6300

**BROOKSVILLE MAN INDICTED FOR DRUG AND GUN CHARGES RELATED TO
HIGH SPEED CHASE THAT INJURED PASCO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPUTY**

Tampa, Florida - United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill today announced the return of an indictment of LESLIE RAY COLLINS, a 27-year-old resident of Brooksville, Florida, charging COLLINS with conspiracy to possess and possession of methamphetamine, and the use of firearms, including a machine gun, during a drug trafficking crime. If convicted, COLLINS faces a minimum term of imprisonment of 35 years up to life imprisonment and a fine of \$2 million. The indictment also charges, MARY BETH JOHNSON, a 25-year-old resident of New Port Richey, Florida, as an accomplice in the drug crimes. The penalties JOHNSON faces, if convicted, are a minimum term of imprisonment of five years and up to 40 years' imprisonment and a fine of \$2 million.

According to the indictment, COLLINS and JOHNSON were involved in a conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine and cocaine. COLLINS is charged separately with using firearms, including a sub machine gun, during and in relation to his drug trafficking. A complaint filed earlier in the case, alleged that on March 5, 2008, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office executed a search warrant on COLLINS' residence located at 9078 West Street, Brooksville, Florida, wherein methamphetamine, a .9 millimeter handgun, a machine gun, and other items were seized. However, COLLINS was

not present at the residence at that time. The complaint further states, that the Pasco County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) located COLLINS driving a stolen vehicle, with JOHNSON as a passenger, in Pasco County on March 6, 2008. COLLINS fled from deputies at speeds approaching 100 miles per hour. The chase continued for 10-15 minutes before COLLINS forced both a PCSO deputy and a Florida Highway Patrol (FHP) trooper off the road. Seconds thereafter, COLLINS swerved the stolen truck into the path of an oncoming PCSO deputy's cruiser and then crashed head on into the cruiser, injuring the deputy who was driving. At the crash scene, deputies found a black bag next to the stolen truck which contained approximately 40 grams of cocaine and approximately 58 grams of crystal methamphetamine.

In announcing the indictment, United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill said, "The United States will continue to make it a top priority to pursue and imprison drug traffickers who use guns and violence in their trade, particularly when the targets of their violence are law enforcement officers."

The case was investigated by the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Pasco County Sheriff's Office, and the Hernando County Sheriff's Office and will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Matthew H. Perry.

A complaint is merely an allegation that a defendant has committed a criminal offense and an indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws. Every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.