



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 14, 2009

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LEADER OF DRUG TRAFFICKING CONSPIRACY SENTENCED

Fort Wayne, IN—The United States Attorney's Office announced that Marlyn Barnes, 26, of Gary, Indiana, was sentenced to 292 months imprisonment for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute more than 5 kilograms of cocaine, and 60 months imprisonment for armed drug trafficking to be served consecutively, with all to be followed by 5 years supervised release, after being convicted after a jury trial in February, 2008.

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and local area police departments jointly conducted an 18 month investigation which resulted in federal charges being brought and, ultimately, the conviction of six (6) participants in the offense. Barnes, who admitted to being a former 5th Avenue Vice Lord gang member, was the leader of the individuals who came together to use firearms to steal what they believed to be a drug shipment coming to Northern Indiana from Texas. The criminal conspiracy was thwarted when the six conspirators were arrested in May, 2006 by ATF agents and officers of the Fort Wayne Police Department.

The evidence presented during trial revealed that Barnes recruited other individuals from the Gary, Indiana area to provide man power and fire power to assist in the rip off of the load of drugs, which in reality, did not exist. At the time of his arrest, Barnes possessed an AK 47 rifle with a 75 round drum magazine (loaded with 70 rounds), a Kel-Tec 5.56 caliber pistol with two banana clip type magazines (30 round capacity), 125 rounds of ammunition and two ballistic vests for use in the robbery. The sentenced imposed by U.S. District Judge Theresa L. Springmann included increased penalties for Barnes because he was found to be the leader of the individuals, had obstructed justice when testifying at his co-defendant Melvin Taylor's trial, and was in possession of and planned to use body armor and weapons with a high capacity magazines during the commission of the offense.

“ATF and local police departments, to include the Fort Wayne Police Department, combined to make a strong and effective team in combating violent crime. This case demonstrates the long standing, successful cooperation between ATF and Fort Wayne Police. We will continue to remove those individuals that wreak havoc on this community through violence”, said Christopher Sadowski, Special Agent in Charge, ATF, Columbus Field Division.

This investigation began in late 2005 and resulted in several federal convictions, which include the following sentences: Michael Alexander, 78 months in federal prison, Theodis Armstead , 78 months in federal prison, Vernell Brown, 120 months in federal prison, and Herbert Hightower, 78 months in federal prison. The remaining co defendant, Melvin Taylor, was convicted following a jury trial and is awaiting sentencing.

This case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Fort Wayne Police Department, the Garret Police Department, the Dekalb County Sheriff Department, and the Allen County Prosecutor’s Office. This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Tina L. Nommay and Anthony W. Geller.