



U. S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
George E. B. Holding

Eastern District of North Carolina

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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LAST OF NINE DEFENDANTS IN OPERATION "HOT SOUP" PLEADS GUILTY

RALEIGH - United States Attorney George E.B. Holding announced that in federal court here on September 29, 2008, **JAMES WILLIE PATTERSON**, 54, of Robeson County, North Carolina, pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute more than fifty (50) grams of cocaine base (crack), a Schedule II controlled substance. **PATTERSON** was the last of nine defendants who were indicted and arrested as part of operation "Hot Soup." On May 28, 2008, after a nearly year-long undercover operation, over one hundred and twenty agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives executed multiple arrest and search warrants on an open air gun and drug market that had been operating in Robeson County, North Carolina.

All nine of the individuals indicted and arrested to date as part of the operation have pleaded guilty. Specifically, and in addition to **JAMES WILLIE PATTERSON, BENNIE LEE CAMPBELL, CHARLES MELVIN CAMPBELL JR., TISHIRA RENELL CAMPBELL, DERRICK FLOYD CARTHENS, CLIFTON LEE MELVIN, LARRY WAYNE MCMILLAN, TINA ANNE OXENDINE**, and **CRAIG ROBINSON** have all also pleaded guilty to conspiring to distribute and to possess with intent to distribute

more than fifty (50) grams of cocaine base (crack), a Schedule II controlled substance. **CHARLES MELVIN CAMPBELL JR.**, and **DERRICK FLOYD CARTHENS** also pleaded guilty to possessing a firearm in furtherance of their drug trafficking conspiracy.

United States Attorney George E.B. Holding commented: ***"These swift and successful prosecutions should send a strong message to criminals throughout our district that the United States can and will marshal the resources and willpower to bring large criminal organizations to justice."***

The Special Agent in Charge of the ATF Charlotte Field Division, Zebedee T. Graham, noted: *"These defendants ran a highly organized drug trafficking ring for decades while using firearms to protect the business in an area known as the 'Compound.' This highly coordinated investigation involving the Red Springs Police Department, ATF and the United States Attorney's Office demonstrates how serious we take offenses against our communities like these. We will continue to work as a single cohesive unit to identify and remove anyone that believes they can conduct similar violations of the law."*

Assistant United States Attorneys Jason Cowley and Denise Walker served as prosecutors for the government in this matter.

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