



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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COUNCIL MAN/DRUG DEALER PLEADS GUILTY

GREENVILLE - United States Attorney George E. B. Holding announced that in federal court on February 4, 2008, **ERNEST LEE SMITH**, 39, of Council, North Carolina, pleaded guilty to distribution of cocaine base and of possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime before United States Magistrate Judge David W. Daniel.

A federal Grand Jury returned a Criminal Indictment on October 24, 2007 charging him with the offenses. Bladen County narcotics detectives received a tip that **SMITH** would be distributing drugs at a McDonald's restaurant in Elizabethtown and surveillance was set up. A detective witnessed a drug customer enter **SMITH's** Ford Explorer and appear to hand **SMITH** an object. Agents observed **SMITH** make the hand to hand transaction.

While the crack cocaine was being recovered from the customer, detectives searched **SMITH** recovering 2.1 grams of cocaine base and \$671.00. **SMITH** was asked if he had any weapons and he confirmed that he had a firearm in the center console of his vehicle. An Omega, .22 caliber revolver was retrieved from that area.

United States Attorney George Holding stated, "**With federal**

and county law enforcement working together, another drug dealer is in the process of being taken off the streets. We commend the hard work of our law enforcement."

The case, a Project Safe Neighborhoods, is being investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and the Bladen County Sheriff's Office. Assistant United States Attorney Michael G. James is the prosecutor assigned to the case.

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