



NEWS RELEASE

Office of the United States Attorney
Eastern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: March 23, 2004

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PRISON SENTENCE FOR DRUG DEFENDANT

(Tyler, Texas) A 21-year-old East Texan has been sentenced to 110 months in federal prison for drug trafficking. This morning, U.S. District Judge Leonard Davis sentenced **CHRISTOPHER JAMES JOHNSON**, for his role in the distribution of crack cocaine in Smith County.

According to information prosecutors presented in court, Johnson, from Chappell Hill, and others were involved in the distribution of cocaine in Tyler and Smith County. They utilized various suppliers to acquire quantities of crack cocaine, cocaine and methamphetamine to sell, and recruited others to distribute these illegal controlled substances in varying quantities. Recognizing the growing problem, Smith County Sheriff J.B. Smith requested federal assistance in the fall of 2002. Soon thereafter, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) from Dallas launched an intensive investigation with local law enforcement into the criminal activities of drug dealers in Smith County. It culminated in the indictment of 14 people last August.

Johnson and co-defendant Jennifer Smitha were arrested on August 13, 2003 in a roundup of suspected drug dealers in Tyler and Smith County. Johnson pleaded guilty to two counts of Possession with Intent to Distribute Crack Cocaine.

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U.S. Attorney Matthew D. Orwig says this sentencing should send a message, "This defendant acted with no regard for the community or the people who lived there when dealing drugs. His lengthy sentence should send the message that putting drug dealers behind bars remains a top priority of law enforcement."

The sentencing of Johnson means 7 of the 14 defendants indicted last August have now been sentenced to prison. Smitha, 28, pleaded guilty to Possession with Intent to Distribute Crack Cocaine and Possession with Intent to Distribute Cocaine. She was sentenced to 60 months in prison last Friday. Tyronne Scott was sentenced to 120 months in prison, Simmie Davan Cooks was sentenced to 110 months in prison, Frederick Ladale Attaway was sentenced to 108 months in prison, Richard Travail Jackson, Sr. was sentenced to 50 months in prison and Martin Vergara was sentenced to 30 months in federal prison. Six other defendants have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing. One defendant, Saleem Jaffer Jiwani, was scheduled to plead guilty last November but did not show up for his plea hearing. He is still a fugitive.

The investigation was led by the Drug Enforcement Administration MET, Smith County Sheriff's Office, Smith County District Attorney's Office, the Tyler Police Department, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the FBI, the IRS, the U.S. Marshal Service, and the Northeast Texas Narcotics Task Force. Assistant U.S. Attorney Allen Hurst is prosecuting the cases.

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