



# NEWS RELEASE

Office of the United States Attorney  
Eastern District of Texas

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

DATE: August 23, 2004

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## **BIG TIME METH DEALER GETS BIG TIME PRISON SENTENCE**

(Sherman, Texas) A 49-year-old Paris, Texas, man has been sentenced to 384 months in federal prison for his conviction on federal drug trafficking and gun charges. **RICKEY LYNN WELCH** was sentenced on Wednesday by United States District Judge Leonard Davis for Conspiracy to Manufacture or Possess with Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine, Use or Carrying a Firearm During a Drug Trafficking Crime, and Maintaining a Place for the Distribution and Use of a Controlled Substance. On January 10, 2004, a jury in Sherman, Texas, found him guilty of those charges after deliberating for just over an hour.

According to information presented in court, Welch distributed in excess of 16 kilograms of methamphetamine from his home in Paris over the course of several years. Testimony during the two-day trial showed that Welch maintained in excess of 21 firearms in furtherance of the drug trafficking crime.

Co-defendant, **NICKY HIGNIGHT**, 43-years-old of Paris, Texas, pleaded guilty on December 17, 2003, to Conspiracy to Manufacture or Possess with Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine. Judge Davis sentenced Hignight to 60 months in federal prison.

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This case is part of the Methbusters initiative. Methbusters is an aggressive program implemented in the Eastern District of Texas to address the growing problem of methamphetamine trafficking in East Texas. The United States Attorney's Office has joined with law enforcement to aggressively pursue and prosecute those involved with manufacturing and distributing the methamphetamine drug or the chemicals used in its production.

**U.S. Attorney Matthew D. Orwig says this sentencing should send a strong message to methamphetamine dealers, "Methamphetamine has had a devastating impact on society, one which we are committed to disrupting." Orwig also encouraged citizens to become a partner in the Methbusters initiative, "If you suspect someone may be using or distributing methamphetamine, please contact your local law enforcement immediately."**

The case was investigated by the Paris Police Department, Texas Department of Public Safety, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Lamar County Narcotics Task Force. Assistant U.S. Attorney Ernest Gonzalez prosecuted the case.

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