



NEWS RELEASE

Office of the United States Attorney
Eastern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ROUNDUP IN PALESTINE NETS 28 ON DRUG TRAFFICKING CHARGES

(Palestine, Texas) A combined task force of federal and state law enforcement agents have begun arresting individuals involved in drug trafficking in Palestine and Anderson County this morning. The arrests mark the final phase of a two year investigation into the sale and distribution of crack cocaine in the city of Palestine.

According to court documents, the Dogwood Trails Task Force began an investigation in November 2002, into a crack cocaine distribution ring originating in Anderson County. The conspirators utilized various suppliers to acquire quantities of crack cocaine to sell, and recruited others to distribute the crack in varying quantities. The investigation also revealed links to drug suppliers and distributors in Dallas and Houston. As a result of this investigation, a total of 72 individuals have been indicted on multiple state and federal charges ranging from federal Conspiracy to Distribute a Controlled Substance to state charges of Delivery of a Controlled Substance. On September 14, 2004, a federal grand jury in Tyler returned indictments against sixteen defendants in three separate sealed indictments. The Anderson County grand jury also returned indictments in September charging 56 defendants with various drug trafficking charges.

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Early this morning, officers from several local, state and federal agencies began executing search warrants and arresting the individuals named in the federal and state indictments as well as seizing properties, residences, additional narcotics, drug proceeds, vehicles and guns associated with the drug trafficking activity. So far, six federal defendants and 22 state drug defendants are in custody. Authorities will continue to make arrests during the day.

U.S. Attorney Matthew D. Orwig praised the work of the DEA, and The Dogwood Trails Task Force in Palestine for their efforts to deal with crack cocaine, "This coordinated effort shows the success that can be achieved when resources and people are pooled together. The disruption and dismantling of conspiracies like these will continue to be a top priority of law enforcement in East Texas."

Special Agent in Charge Gary G. Olenkiewicz, head of the Dallas Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration joins U.S Attorney Orwig in praising the efforts of this combined team of investigators. "The US Attorney's Office of the Eastern District of Texas and the Anderson County District Attorney's Office have once again provided invaluable support to the investigators of all agencies involved in this case. DEA is proud to be a part of this joint agency initiative led by the Dogwood Trails Task Force."

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If convicted, many of the defendants face a maximum sentence of life in prison. Other defendants face between 40 and 300 years in prison. It is important to note that an indictment is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of either guilt or innocence.

The investigation and early morning arrests and searches were led by the Dogwood Trails Task Force in Palestine and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Also participating in the investigation and arrests of these defendants were officers from the Palestine Police Department, the Anderson County Sheriff's Office, Rusk Police Department, Anderson County Constables, Anderson County District Attorney's Office, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, North East Texas Narcotics Task Force, Texas Department of Public Safety, United States Marshals Service and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Assistant U.S. Attorney Allen Hurst is prosecuting the federal cases.

The Dogwood Trails Narcotics Task Force is comprised of officers from the Texas Department of Public Safety, Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Palestine Police Department, Anderson County Sheriff's Office and the Rusk Police Department.

For additional information contact:

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Palestine Round-up

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<u>Federal Defendants</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Residence</u>
1. Roy Lee Tatum	29	Palestine, Anderson County
2.		
3. Rodney Dewayne McMorris	33	Palestine, Anderson County
4. Vanuel Christopher Kimbrough	31	Palestine, Anderson County
5. Glenn Charles Angton	32	Palestine, Anderson County
6.		
7.		
8. Ross McMorris, Jr.	56	Palestine, Anderson County
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13. Walter Joe White	50	Palestine, Anderson County
14.		
15.		
16.		

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