



**U. S. Department of Justice**  
*United States Attorney*  
*Eastern District of Washington*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

<b>FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE</b>  Thursday, January 19, 2012	<b>FOR INFORMATION CONTACT:</b>  Thomas Rice, First Assistant U.S. Attorney (509) 353-2767
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### **Sweeping Law Enforcement Operation Yields Over Two Dozen Arrests today in Spokane, Kennewick, Walla Walla, Prosser and Weston, Oregon**

Spokane – Today, Michael C. Ormsby, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, joined today by Spokane Chief of Police Scott Stephens, Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich, Spokane Valley Chief of Police Richard VanLeuven, Washington State Patrol Chief John R. Batiste, FBI Seattle Special Agent-in-Charge Laura M. Laughlin, ATF Acting Special Agent-in-Charge Doug Dawson, and United States Marshal Craig Thayer announced the results of a joint law enforcement operation targeting gang activity across eastern Washington and northern Oregon.

Today, over a dozen indictments were unsealed which charge numerous counts of distribution of methamphetamine and other drugs against members and associates of various gangs and drug organizations. Some were charged as convicted felons in possession of firearms. The sealed indictments were returned on December 20, 2011, by a federal grand jury. This morning, during a massive law enforcement operation involving more than 100 federal, state and local authorities, over two dozen defendants were arrested in the Spokane area, Kennewick, Prosser, Walla Walla and Weston, Oregon. Another 4 were arrested on state charges. Authorities continue to search for others. Over 25 federal search warrants were executed in connection with these arrests. Law enforcement seized over 8 pounds of methamphetamine, 40 firearms, one grenade, an estimated \$150,000 in currency and valuables, and ten vehicles.

Today's operation caps another months-long investigation conducted by the Spokane Violent Crime Gang Enforcement Team and partner agencies. This case was made possible by a time-tested and progressive law enforcement model, in which federal authorities work shoulder-to-shoulder with their local and state counterparts to investigate and dismantle gang-related and other violent criminal enterprises. "Without a close, daily working relationship among our local, state and federal authorities, such a cohesive, effective effort to staunch an expanding wave of organized criminal activity would be impossible," said U.S. Attorney Mike Ormsby. "Only

through these types of collaborative law enforcement efforts are we able to continue to disrupt and dismantle sophisticated criminal enterprises that would otherwise spread violence and misery in their wake.”

FBI Special Agent-in-Charge Laura M. Laughlin noted “As we all know, across this country, and in eastern Washington, violent gang culture has become a part of the daily lives of teachers and taxi drivers, police officers and pastors, parents and children. The siren song of gang life lulls too many of our youth into lives of crime, drugs, and violence. The FBI remains committed to protecting our community by ensuring that members of these criminal enterprises are held fully accountable by our justice system.”

"Sadly, far too many Spokane citizens are impacted by violent criminal enterprises, and the harm they inflict on this community," said Spokane Chief of Police Scott Stephens. "We cannot allow this, and so the fight against the violence, theft and addiction wrought by these groups will remain one of the top priorities of the Spokane Police Department. This investigation reflects the fundamental importance of close, personal cooperation between law enforcement partners, and the dividends that such intelligence driven teamwork can generate, especially in an era of diminishing resources.”

“Nearly six years ago our law enforcement community determined there was a better way to rid our community of violent gang/drug crimes, and hold those who commit these crimes accountable.” Spokane County Sheriff Ozzie Knezovich remarked, “These indictments and arrests highlight a system where all law enforcement, local, state, and federal, have joined together as one unit to deal with violent gang and drug crimes in our community. The Regional Gang Enforcement Team is just one example of what can be accomplished when law enforcement works together on an issue rather than worrying about jurisdictional boundaries. I can assure you, those individuals committing these crimes do not care about whose jurisdiction they are in when they commit crimes. Our citizens are demanding a secure community where they can raise their children, work, and enjoy life without the threat of gang or drug violence. It’s law enforcement’s job to provide this safe and secure community, and these arrests send a clear message to individuals who would commit these crimes in our community; you will be arrested and you will be held accountable. One of my highest priorities is to ensure law enforcement at all levels will continue working together to find better ways to keep our community safe.”

ATF Acting Special Agent-in-Charge Douglas Dawson commented: “All of us have observed the tragedy and devastation that gang violence and other organized criminal activity brings to a community. Sadly, today, these groups are more violent, more organized, and more widespread than ever before. Investigations like this continue to demonstrate that, by removing these criminals from our midst, we can continue to enjoy neighborhoods free from the gun violence and theft wrought by the illegal drug trade.”

The defendants charged in the federal indictments are as follows:

Charles M. Bell, age 63, of Spokane, WA  
Michael Bell, age 40, of Spokane, WA

Brandon B. Blanche, age 25, of Nevada  
Christopher Brotherton, age 32, Walla Walla, WA  
Johauna M. Byers, age 28, of Spokane, WA  
Tyrone J. Carell, age 24 of Spokane, WA  
William Childs, age 40, of Kennewick, WA  
Donald Cummings, age 55, of Kennewick, WA  
Ryan Doherty, age 24, of Spokane, WA  
Christopher D. Drumgoole, age 26, of Spokane, WA  
Keith Hall, age 42, of Walla Walla, WA  
Joshua J. Kaczor, age 32, of Spokane, WA  
Edgar Lizarraga-Felix, age 28, of Pasco, WA  
David McLaughlin, age 21, of Spokane, WA  
Paul L. Rios, age 30, of Spokane, WA  
Amador Sanchez, age 31, of Kennewick, WA  
Robert Michael Sevey, age 55, of Spokane, WA  
Michael A. Shahinian, age 45, of Spokane, WA  
Clayton D. Sibbett, age 42, of Weston, Oregon  
Alethea Sibbett, age 38, of Weston, Oregon  
Teal Nicholas Terrell, age 19, of Spokane, WA  
Edward L. Thomas, age 26, of Spokane, WA  
Siaosilepelenise L. Tuaimalo, age 30, of Spokane, WA  
Michael Wilson, age 44, of Spokane Valley, WA  
Alice Woodburn, age 49, of Spokane Valley, WA

The drug distribution charges carry potential sentences of up to 20 years imprisonment or more, while the firearm offenses carry up to 10 years imprisonment.

The Spokane Violent Crime Gang Enforcement Team is an FBI Safe Streets Task Force. Since January 1992, the FBI the Safe Streets Violent Crime Initiative has grown to include 160 task forces across the nation. This program, administered by the FBI's Safe Streets and Gang Unit, allows each FBI Field Division to address violent street gangs and other violent crime through the establishment of long-term, proactive task forces focusing on dismantling criminal enterprises. In the last few years, the United States Department of Justice has taken several important steps to address the prevalence of gang violence. First, the Department established an Anti-Gang Coordination Committee to organize the Department's wide-ranging efforts to combat gangs. Second, each United States Attorney has appointed an Anti-Gang Coordinator to provide leadership and focus to our anti-gang efforts at the district level. Finally, the Anti-Gang Coordinators, in consultation with their state and local law enforcement and community partners, have developed comprehensive, district-wide strategies to address the gang problems in their districts. The agencies involved in this operation include the Spokane County Sheriff's Office, the Spokane Police Department, the Airway Heights Police Department, the Walla Walla County Sheriff's Office, the Walla Walla Police Department, the Kennewick Police Department, the Benton County Sheriff's Office, the Prosser Police Department, the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, the Yakima County Sheriff's Office, the Washington State Patrol, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the United States Marshals Service, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations,

the Drug Enforcement Administration, the United States Border Patrol, the Washington State Gambling Commission, the Washington State Department of Corrections, the Spokane Regional Drug Task Force, the Tri-Cities Violent Gang Task Force, the North Idaho Regional Violent Crime Task Force and the Tri-Cities Metro Drug Task Force. These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Aine Ahmed and Special Assistant United States Attorney Larry Haskell.

An Indictment Contains Allegations That a Defendant Has Committed a Crime. Every Defendant Is Presumed Innocent Until and Unless Proven Guilty Beyond a Reasonable Doubt.