



Orange County News

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District Attorney Hoovler Announces Guilty Pleas in Drug Distribution Conspiracy Cases

Defendants Pled Guilty to Felony Conspiracy and Weapons Charges

“Operation Family Ties” Targeted Major Narcotics Distributors

Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler announced on Monday, June 19, 2017, that Mark Robinson, 36, and Steven Reed, 24, both of Newburgh, each pled guilty before Orange County Court Judge Robert H. Freehill to the Class B felony of Conspiracy in the Second Degree, in connection the “Operation Family Ties” narcotics conspiracy investigation.

In May, 2017, an Orange County grand jury had charged 35 defendants with felonies related to conspiring to sell cocaine and heroin, largely in the Newburgh area. The grand jury issued two indictments that alleged the existence of two separate conspiracies to distribute narcotics. The indictments charge Conspiracy in the Second Degree, Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance in the First Degree, and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Second Degree, as well as other charges.

On March 13, 2017, the New York State Police, the City of Newburgh Police Department, and the Orange County District Attorney’s Office executed sixteen search warrants and arrested over thirty individuals on felony charges as part of a nine-month narcotics investigation, dubbed “Operation Family Ties.” The United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the Town of New Windsor Police, the Town of Newburgh Police, the City of Port Jervis Police, and the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance also aided in the execution of the warrants.

The investigation targeted the distribution of heroin, cocaine, PCP, and marijuana in the City of Newburgh and several surrounding towns in Orange County. The investigation began in June, 2016, when the City of Newburgh Police Department and the New York State Police received

information about illegal narcotics sales in the area of 170 Carson Avenue in the City of Newburgh.

Robinson and Reed each admitted being part of a conspiracy to distribute heroin, cocaine, and phencyclidine (PCP). Both are scheduled to be sentenced on August 14, 2017.

A number of other defendants have already pled guilty in connection with the enforcement action. On May 24, 2017, Kihuana Blackmon, 37, of Newburgh, pled guilty to felony charges of Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree, and is scheduled to be sentenced on July 10, 2017. On June 6, 2017, Desmond Williams, 18, of Newburgh, pled guilty to Criminal Possession of a Firearm, a felony, and Shanice Jones, 24, of Newburgh pled guilty to the Class B felony of Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance in the Third Degree. They are scheduled to be sentenced on July 13, 2017 and July 17, 2017, respectively. On June 12, 2017, Thomas Downer, 46, of Newburgh, pled guilty to the Class B felony of Conspiracy in the Second Degree, and is scheduled to be sentenced on July 17, 2017. On June 16, 2017, Valerie Williams, 41, and Tamika Clegg, 42, both of Newburgh, pled guilty to felony charges of Conspiracy in the Fourth Degree, and are scheduled to be sentenced on July 28, 2017. That same day, Lamara Williams, 26, of Newburgh, pled guilty to the Class B felony of Conspiracy in the Second Degree, and is scheduled to be sentenced on July 14, 2017.

In addition to the criminal charges, the Orange County District Attorney's Office has begun a civil forfeiture proceeding against many of the defendants, in order to seize from them the profits that they have made by illegally selling narcotics. The suit seeks over \$3,000,000 in illegally-obtained profits.

District Attorney Hoovler thanked the New York State Police Community Narcotics Enforcement Team, the City of Newburgh Police Department, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the Town of New Windsor Police, the Town of Newburgh Police, the City of Port Jervis Police, and the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance Criminal Investigations Division for their efforts in this investigation. District Attorney Hoovler highly commended the New York State Police for their investigation, given the complexity of the case.

Assistant District Attorney Neal Eriksen assisted in the investigation of the case and is prosecuting all of the defendants charged in the operation.

“The conspiracies that these defendants admitted being part of illustrate just how organized drug traffickers can be as they attempt to profit from the opioid epidemic,” said District Attorney Hoovler. “It is only through coordinated enforcement actions such as ‘Operation Family Ties’ that law enforcement is able to pursue those higher-level drug dealers and craftier offenders who attempt to insulate themselves from criminal liability by dealing drugs through intermediaries.

Although we have emphasized education and treatment as important avenues to keep people off drugs in the first place, so that we may dry up the demand for illegal narcotics, we have also made it a priority to attack the supply of narcotics by vigorous enforcement actions against narcotics dealers. My office will continue to use every tool at our disposal, including the use of wiretaps, civil forfeiture actions, and criminal statutes that have never been charged before in Orange County, to combat the illicit narcotics trade and all types of organized criminal activity.”

A criminal charge is merely an allegation that a defendant has committed a violation of the criminal law, and it is not evidence of guilt. All defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the State’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.



Mark Robinson



Steven Reed



Kihuana Blackmon



Desmond Williams



Shanice Jones



Thomas Downer



Valerie Williams



Tamika Clegg



Lamara Williams