



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **FEDERAL JURY CONVICTS BRANSON MAN IN METH CONSPIRACY**

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Branson, Mo., man was convicted by a federal jury today of participating in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine in Taney County, Mo.

**Michael R. Burns**, 54, of Branson, Mo., was found guilty of all three counts of a federal indictment.

“**Michael Burns** was a large scale meth dealer,” Graves said. “He obtained multi-pound quantities of methamphetamine from California to distribute in southwest Missouri. Since 1998, Burns distributed at least 10 kilograms of methamphetamine in Taney County.”

The jury in U.S. District Court in Springfield deliberated less than three hours before returning the guilty verdict to U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr, ending a trial that began Oct. 27, 2003.

**Burns** was arrested on July 29, 2002, after selling methamphetamine to an undercover law enforcement officer. On Jan. 24, 2003, **Burns** was indicted for conspiracy to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine in Taney County between April 1998 and July 29, 2002. **Burns** was also charged with two counts of distributing 50 grams or more of methamphetamine in Taney County in separate incidents on June 7 and 25, 2002.

Two co-defendants have already pleaded guilty and await sentencing. **Sean L. Davis**, 28, Branson, Mo., pleaded guilty on Sept. 15, 2003, to conspiracy to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine. By pleading guilty, Graves said, **Davis** admitted that he received supplies of methamphetamine from **Burns**, which he redistributed to others in southwest Missouri. On June 4, 2003, co-defendant **Howard A. Neustel**, 33, of Kirbyville, Mo., pleaded guilty to his role in the conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. By pleading guilty, Graves said, **Neustel** also

admitted that he received supplies of methamphetamine from **Burns**, which he redistributed to others in southwest Missouri.

As a result of **Burns'** conviction, he could be subject to a statutory minimum sentence of at least 10 years in federal prison without parole, up to life imprisonment, plus a fine up to \$4 million. **Burns'** sentence will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of presentence investigation by the U.S. Probation Office.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Randy Eggert and Kimberly Weber-Dean. The case was investigated by COMET (the Combined Ozarks Multi-jurisdictional Enforcement Team) and the Branson, Mo., Police Department, with assistance from the sheriff's departments of Taney County and Greene County, Mo., and San Bernardino, Calif., the Santa Barbara Drug TaskForce and the Drug Enforcement Administration.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at  
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