



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOUR SOUTHERN MISSOURI MEN INDICTED ON METH, FIREARM CHARGES

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced today that four southern Missouri men have been indicted on various charges related to distributing methamphetamine in Taney County and illegal possession of firearms.

Michael R. Burns, 54, and **Sean L. Davis**, 27, both of Branson; **Howard A. Neustel**, 32, of Kirbyville, Mo.; and **Alonzo F. Ellerman**, 41, of Hollister, Mo.; were charged in a seven-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury meeting in Springfield on Jan. 23, 2003. The indictment, which was sealed, was opened by the court and made public this morning upon the arrest and initial court appearance of **Davis**.

Count One of the federal indictment alleges that all four defendants participated in a conspiracy to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine in Taney County between April 1998 and July 29, 2002.

Count Two of the federal indictment alleges that **Ellerman** was in possession of six firearms on Jan. 18, 2002, in Taney County. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for a convicted felon to possess any firearm. According to the indictment, **Ellerman** has a 1982 criminal felony conviction for assault in Vernon County and a 1982 criminal felony conviction for burglary and stealing in Cass County. The indictment alleges that **Ellerman** was in possession of a Spanish 410 gauge shotgun, a Rossi 410 gauge shotgun, a Ruger 10/22 caliber carbine, a Winchester 30-30 caliber rifle, an AMT .22 caliber handgun and a Taurus .40 caliber handgun.

Counts Three, Four, and Five of the federal indictment alleges that **Neustel** distributed less than 50 grams of methamphetamine in Taney County in separate incidents on Jan. 25 and 31, 2002 and on Feb. 5, 2002.

Counts Six and Seven of the federal indictment alleges that **Burns** distributed 50 grams or more of methamphetamine in Taney County in separate incidents on June 7 and 25, 2002.

Graves cautioned that the charges contained in the indictment are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robyn L. McKee. 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.

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
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow