



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

TODD P. GRAVES

Contact Don Ledford, Public Affairs • (816) 426-4220 • 400 East Ninth Street, Room 5510 • Kansas City, MO 64106

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HIGGINSVILLE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO THREATENING A WITNESS, FIREARMS VIOLATION

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Higginsville, Mo., man pleaded guilty in federal court today to being a felon in possession of a firearm and to tampering with a witness or informant.

William Earl Cox, 49, of Higginsville, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Chief Judge Dean Whipple this morning to a federal indictment that was returned by the grand jury on July 22, 2003.

Cox was arrested on April 11, 2003, Graves said, when the Lafayette County Drug Task Force executed a search warrant at his residence as part of an ongoing investigation into suspected methamphetamine manufacturing. **Cox** was sitting in front of a computer monitor, with a loaded Ruger 9mm pistol laying beside it. There was also a loaded 9mm clip and more ammunition in a box found in the file cabinet just under the bar where the computer was sitting.

Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for anyone convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Cox** has a 1998 criminal felony conviction for unlawful use of a weapon; four 1984 criminal felony convictions for possession of illegal narcotics with intent to distribute, possession of marijuana with intent to distribute, cultivation of marijuana, and possession of a sawed-off shotgun; and two 1981 criminal felony convictions for possession of illegal narcotics with intent to distribute and possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

By pleading guilty, **Cox** also admitted that he threatened another person with the intent to influence, delay or prevent the testimony of a confidential information in an official proceeding.

On April 12, 2003, Graves said, **Cox** called the informant (the cooperating witness on the

search warrant) and left a recording that said, “I guess you know you’re a dead man, don’t you ... if you don’t, you will soon ... see ya, rat.” Graves added that a letter was intercepted at the Lafayette County Jail from **Cox** to his son, which included a note at the bottom that, “the trap has been set for the rat.”

Under federal statutes, **Cox** could be subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in federal prison without parole, up to life imprisonment without parole, plus a fine up to \$500,000. His sentence will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney Bruce Rhoades. It was investigated by the Lafayette County Drug Task Force and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

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