



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

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow

NOVEMBER 10, 2003
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KIRBYVILLE MAN SENTENCED FOR INVOLVEMENT IN METH CONSPIRACY

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Kirbyville, Mo., man was sentenced in federal court today for his role in a methamphetamine conspiracy.

Howard A. Neustel, 33, of Kirbyville, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr this morning to four years and nine months in federal prison without parole.

On June 4, 2003, **Neustel** pleaded guilty to his role in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. By pleading guilty, Graves said, **Neustel** admitted that he received supplies of methamphetamine from a co-defendant, which were redistributed to others in southwest Missouri.

Several other co-defendants also have been convicted for their involvement in this methamphetamine conspiracy.

Alonzo F. Ellerman, 42, of Hollister, Mo., was convicted by a federal jury on Nov. 5, 2003, and found guilty of two counts of a federal indictment, which alleged his participating in a conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

Ellerman was convicted of conspiracy to distribute 500 grams or more of methamphetamine between as early as April 1998 and continuing until July 29, 2002, in Taney County, Mo. He also was found guilty of being a felon in possession of several firearms. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Ellerman** was found guilty of being in possession of six firearms on Jan. 18, 2002. He has two 1982 criminal felony convictions for assault and burglary.

Ellerman is the second co-defendant to be convicted by a federal jury in this case.

Michael R. Burns, 54, of Branson, Mo., was found guilty of all three counts of the federal indictment on Oct. 30, 2003. His trial began on 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.

In addition to the two jury convictions, another co-defendant has pleaded guilty and awaits sentencing in this case.

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

Each of the defendants were originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on Jan. 23, 2003, in Springfield.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robyn 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 Task Force 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