



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney David L. Huber  
Western District of Kentucky

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
FRIDAY, AUGUST 1, 2008  
WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/KYW

CONTACT: SANDY FOCKEN  
PHONE: (502) 582-5911  
FAX: (502) 582-5097

**PADUCAH CRACK DEALER SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS AND 8 MONTHS  
AS CAREER OFFENDER IN FEDERAL COURT**

*- Four-time felon on parole when charged  
- Estimated \$100,000 of personal property forfeited as drug proceeds*

PADUCAH, KY - James Fitzgerald Watson, age 44 of Paducah, Kentucky was sentenced to 15 years and 8 months in United States District Court, Paducah, Kentucky, for conspiring to possess with intent to distribute crack-cocaine, David L. Huber, United States Attorney for the Western District of Kentucky, and Paul Vido, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Louisville Field Division, jointly announced today. Thomas Russell, Judge, United States District Court, also sentenced Watson to 4 years supervised release following incarceration. There is no parole in the federal judicial system.

U.S. Attorney Huber praised the special partnership program of the ATF and the Paducah Police Department saying that it “allows local drug dealers to be targeted and helps reduce violence in Paducah.”

This case was developed with a partnership of the Paducah Police Department and targeted local crack dealers in Paducah. Both Watson and one of his co-defendants, Peter Gray have prior state court convictions for trafficking in crack-cocaine and have been operating in Paducah for the past several years. Watson had previously been convicted of Trafficking in Cocaine in McCracken Circuit Court in 1992. He was sentenced in that case to 5 years custody but was released on state parole in 1996 after having served 3 years. In 2001, Watson received

another felony conviction in McCracken Circuit Court for Trafficking in a Controlled Substance. In that case, he was sentenced to 10 years in prison but was again released on state parole in 2003 after having served only 18 months in prison.

Between February 2006 and April, 2007, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), working with the Paducah Police Department, utilized a confidential informant to make 4 controlled buys of crack-cocaine from Watson and co-defendant Peter Gray in McCracken County, Kentucky.

ATF and Paducah Police also obtained federal search warrants in September 2006 for Watson's home and for the residence Watson was renting to co-defendant Lawrence Murff who cooked the cocaine into "crack" for Watson. A search of Watson's home revealed 18.9 grams of crack-cocaine. ATF seized more than an estimated \$100,000 of Watson's personal property including two vehicles, jewelry, tools, and electronics that had been purchased with drug proceeds.

Investigation revealed that over 18 months, Murff had cooked quantities of powder cocaine into crack-cocaine for Watson on approximately ten occasions. Watson would give Murff user amounts of crack-cocaine in exchange for cooking crack-cocaine for Watson. Gray would deliver the crack-cocaine to Watson's customers. Lab reports confirm that the total amount of crack-cocaine recovered by law enforcement during the conspiracy time frame set forth in the Indictment was 21.62 net grams. The crack-cocaine recovered in this matter has a street value of over \$2,100.

On October 9, 2007, the federal grand jury in Paducah returned an Indictment charging the three men with conspiring to possess with intent to distribute crack-cocaine and warrants were issued for their arrest. When ATF and Paducah Police went to arrest Watson, he fled on foot. After a short foot pursuit, Watson was caught at which time he attempted to resist arrest. Watson was taken into custody after a slight altercation with an ATF agent and appeared before Magistrate Judge David King on October 17, 2007. At Watson's detention hearing, Judge King

found that “Trafficking in controlled substances is recognized as constituting a danger to the community. The defendant has previously been twice convicted of a controlled substances offense in state court. If convicted in this court, the mandatory minimum sentence which may be imposed by the court is ten (10) years (x2). At the time of the commission of the present alleged offenses, the defendant was on parole imposed by the state court. The weight of the evidence against the defendant is heavy as he has made inculpatory statements and has participated in four (4) controlled sales of cocaine. He had cocaine in his possession at the time of his arrest. The defendant attempted to flee on foot at the time of his arrest and otherwise resisted arrest.” Judge King then remanded Watson to the custody of the U.S. Marshals without bond.

On January 24 2008, co-defendant Peter Gray pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge. Co-defendant Murff pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge on March 11, 2008, and Defendant Watson pleaded guilty on March 12, 2008. On June 13, 2008, Murff was sentenced to 7 years imprisonment, and Gray was sentenced to 7 years and 8 months imprisonment. Both Murff and Gray also received 4 years of supervised release following incarceration.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Michele Thielhorn. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Louisville Field Division/Paducah Satellite Office conducted the investigation in partnership with the Paducah Police Department, as part of ATF’s mandated mission to reduce violent crime and other threats to public safety.

###