

Huff now facing federal indictment on methamphetamine distribution, gun possession

Written by Marty Randall

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U.S. Attorney General Joseph Hogsett announced this past week that a Scott County man has been indicted on two counts by a federal grand jury.

Lonnie Dean Huff, Austin, was indicted two weeks after he was located by a special task force at a motel near Belterra Casino in Vevay and taken into custody. That effort was based on a warrant issued out of Scott Circuit Court when Huff failed to appear for a jury trial on February 25.

Now, he has been indicted in U.S. District Court in New Albany on one count each of being a felon in possession of a firearm and possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

His Scott County charges included dealing in methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine while possessing a firearm, visiting a common nuisance, possession of drug paraphernalia, possession of marijuana and unlawful possession of a firearm by a serious violent felon. These arose out of Huff's arrest in 2011. Huff was also wanted on charges of theft and criminal mischief filed in February in Jennings Circuit Court.

Huff faces up to 20 years in federal prison on the indicted charges. He is currently being held without bond in a federal prison facility, said Hogsett.

"Two years ago, this office pledged to federally prosecute more illegally-armed drug dealers," stated Hogsett. "Our success in that effort has been due to cases similar to what has been alleged (against Huff), collaborative investigations targeting career criminals who view local jails as their personal 'revolving door.' "

The recent indictment is based upon Huff's Scott County case. Law enforcement found Huff to be in possession of a 9 mm handgun as well as a quantity of methamphetamine that he is alleged to have possessed with the intent to distribute locally. Huff is a convicted felon. He does not have the right to possess a firearm, advised Hogsett. His criminal history includes a 2004 conviction in Scott County for conspiring to commit robbery.

The prosecution comes as part of the U.S. Attorney's Violent Crime Initiative (VCI) and is the result of a collaborative investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation as well as the Scott County Sheriff's Department.

Begun in March, 2011, the VCI represents a district-wide strategy to work with local law enforcement agencies and county prosecutors to combat drug traffickers and criminals that use and carry firearms in their illegal activities. VCI efforts have produced a dramatic increase in the number of gun-related charges brought on the federal level. In the nearly two years of VCI activity, more than 200 defendants have been charged versus 14 charged in 2010.

"Through our Violent Crime Initiative and working with our law enforcement partners here in Scott County, we're sending a message that illegally-armed felons will face the full force of federal law," stated Hogsett.

Assistant U.S. Attorney William L. McCoskey is prosecuting the case against Huff.

He said Huff faces up to ten years in federal prison if found guilty of illegally possessing the firearm and up to 20 years for the drug count.

Huff also faces significant fines and years of federally-supervised release if convicted.

An indictment is only a charge and is not evidence of guilt. The government must prove a defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt during a fair trial.