

Hope Mills Man Gets 34 Years In Federal Prison For Drug Trafficking

By Administrator

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United States District Judge James C. Dever III sentenced Franklin Antonio Rios, 49, of Hope Mills, North Carolina to 408 months' imprisonment, followed by 4 years of supervised release. On August 7, 2018, RIOS pled guilty to one count of Conspiracy to Distribute and Possess with Intent to Distribute 100 Grams or More of Heroin and two counts of Possession of a Firearm in Furtherance of a Drug Trafficking Crime. Additionally, Kayla Nicole Hoskins, 24, of Fayetteville, North Carolina pled guilty to Conspiracy to Distribute and Possess with Intent to Distribute a Quantity of Heroin and Possession of a Firearm in Furtherance of a Drug Trafficking Crime and Aiding and Abetting on July 23, 2018. On May 30, 2019, Judge Dever sentenced her to 54 months' imprisonment followed by 3 years of supervised release.

The Cumberland County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) began investigating a heroin distribution network that had been operating in the Fayetteville area since early 2014. RIOS, the target of the investigation, had been receiving shipments of heroin from his source of supply (SOS). The SOS received regularly-scheduled shipments of heroin from the New Jersey area. Between October 20, 2015, and May 2, 2016, an undercover law enforcement officer, along with a confidential source, conducted 12 undercover purchases of heroin and firearms from RIOS. On one occasion, RIOS was assisted by HOSKINS. All of the controlled transactions took place at RIOS's residence in Hope Mills, North Carolina, with the exception of February 25, 2016, which took place at a convenience store in Hope Mills.

During a transaction on February 10, 2016, the undercover officer purchased a .45 caliber firearm with two magazines, 105 rounds of ammunition and a magazine holder from RIOS. The firearm was later determined to have been stolen from Johnston County. On February 25, 2016, the undercover officer purchased a 30/30 rifle and a 20 gauge shotgun, both with defaced serial numbers, from RIOS. On May 2, 2016, heroin and an 88 model shotgun were purchased from RIOS and HOSKINS. The shotgun was later determined to have been stolen out of Fayetteville.

Following the controlled purchase in May 2016, a search was executed at RIOS's residence. The following was found either in the residence, an outdoor building on the property, or RIOS's Chevrolet Camaro: heroin, Adderall XR pills, Clonazepam pills, Amphetamine/Dextroamphetamine pills, a .38 caliber revolver, a 14 gauge shotgun with no serial number, digital scales, recorded cash from the previous undercover drug transactions, and an additional \$1,011 currency.

Based upon the investigation, at sentencing, RIOS was held accountable for a total of 610.24 grams of heroin, 22.62 grams of actual amphetamine, and 233 Clonazepam pills, for a total of

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1,062.65 kilograms of converted drug weight. RIOS was also found to have maintained a premises for the purpose of manufacturing or distributing a controlled substance, and several of RIOS's customers overdosed from the heroin RIOS provided.

This prosecution is part of an extensive investigation by the United States Attorney's Office's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF). OCDETF is a joint federal, state, and local cooperative approach to combat drug trafficking and is the nation's primary tool for disrupting and dismantling major drug trafficking organizations, targeting national and regional level drug trafficking organizations, and coordinating the necessary law enforcement entities and resources to disrupt or dismantle the targeted criminal organization and seize their assets.

That effort has been implemented through the Take Back North Carolina Initiative of The United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina. This initiative emphasizes the regional assignment of federal prosecutors to work with law enforcement and District Attorney's Offices on a sustained basis in those communities to reduce the violent crime rate, drug trafficking, and crimes against law enforcement.

The Cumberland County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) conducted the investigation in this matter. Assistant United States Attorney Scott A. Lemmon represented the government.