



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Billy J. Williams  
District of Oregon

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## **U.S. ATTORNEY WILLIAMS ANNOUNCES PROGRESS IN MAKING COMMUNITY SAFER THROUGH PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS**

Two years ago, the Department of Justice announced the revitalization and enhancement of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), the centerpiece of the department's violent crime reduction strategy. PSN is an evidence-based program proven to be effective at reducing violent crime. Through PSN, a broad spectrum of stakeholders work together to identify the most pressing violent crime problems in the community and develop comprehensive solutions to address them. As part of this strategy, PSN focuses enforcement efforts on the most violent offenders and partners with locally based prevention and reentry programs for lasting reductions in crime.

Throughout the past two years, we have partnered with all levels of law enforcement, local organizations, and members of the community to reduce violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. According to FBI's Uniform Crime Report released this week, the violent crime rate decreased for the second consecutive year, down 3.9 percent from the 2017 numbers.

"The revitalized Project Safe Neighborhoods program is a major success," said Attorney General William P. Barr. "It packs a powerful punch by combining advanced data with local leadership, further reducing violence in communities across the country and improving overall public safety. U.S. Attorneys continue to focus their enforcement efforts against the most violent criminals and work in partnership with federal, state, local, and tribal police. The Justice Department's relationships across the board have never been stronger."

"The goal of PSN is to decrease violent crime and victimization in Oregon. It remains a key focus of the U.S. Attorney's Office and the entire federal law enforcement community," said Billy J. Williams, U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon. "With the assistance of our federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement partners, we have made significant progress toward this goal throughout the state. We look forward to continuing our efforts over the coming year."

As we celebrate the two-year anniversary of the revitalized PSN program, here are some of the highlights of our PSN actions over the past year:

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon works in partnership with federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute the district's most violent offenders under the PSN program. Recent prosecutions include:

***U.S. v. Wilson***

In December 2018, Gregory Rex Wilson, 52, of Portland, was sentenced to 84 months in federal prison and five years' supervised release for distributing heroin and illegally possessing a firearm.

According to court documents, Wilson was part of a drug trafficking organization that transported heroin from El Monte, California to the Portland metropolitan area. The investigation revealed that Wilson was being supplied with heroin by "Chino Antrax," later identified as co-defendant Pablo Flores. Flores had actively been trafficking heroin to Portland for more than a year. At the time of his arrest on December 12, 2016 in Portland, Wilson had 880 grams of heroin, 100 Xanax pills and a loaded Ruger 9mm pistol in his vehicle. Four additional firearms were later found in a second vehicle owned by Wilson, including one with an obliterated serial number.

The case was investigated by the Clackamas County Interagency Task Force (CCITF), FBI, Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Portland Police Bureau. It was prosecuted by Matthew J. Semritc, Special Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

***U.S. Dencklau et al.***

In January 2019, a federal grand jury returned a five-count superseding indictment charging six members and associates of the Gypsy Joker Outlaw Motorcycle Club (GJOMC) for racketeering, kidnapping and murder.

GJOMC National President Kenneth Earl Hause, 61, of Aumsville, Oregon; Mark Leroy Dencklau, 58, of Woodburn, Oregon; Earl Deverle Fisher, 48, of Gresham, Oregon; Ryan Anthony Negrinelli, 36, of Gresham; Joseph Duane Folkerts, 61, of Battleground, Washington; and a sixth unnamed defendant were charged, as members and associates of the GJOMC, with conspiring to conduct and participate in the activities of a racketeering enterprise.

Additionally, Dencklau, Fisher, Negrinelli, Folkerts and the unnamed defendant were charged with murder in aid of racketeering; kidnapping in aid of racketeering, resulting in death; kidnapping resulting in death; and conspiracy to commit kidnapping, resulting in death for the June 30 to July 1, 2015 kidnapping and murder of Robert Huggins, a former GJOMC member and resident of southeast Portland, for the purpose of maintaining and increasing their positions in the GJOMC criminal enterprise.

Dencklau, Fisher and Tiler Evan Pribbernow, 37, of Portland were first charged in a four-count indictment unsealed in July 2018. Pribbernow pleaded guilty to a single count of conspiring to conduct and participate in the activities of a racketeering enterprise on November 7, 2018. Dencklau and Fisher are detained pending trial.

This case was investigated by the PPB and ATF, with assistance from the U.S. Marshals Service, IRS-Criminal Investigation, Clark County, Washington Sheriff's Office, the Oregon State Police, and the Oregon and Washington State Crime Labs. Leah K. Bolstad and Steven T. Mygrant,

Assistant U.S. Attorneys for the District of Oregon, are prosecuting the case with Rebecca A. Staton, Trial Attorney for the Criminal Division's Organized Crime and Gang Section.

### ***U.S. v. Ochoa***

In April 2019, Jonathan Alan Ochoa, 31, of Talent, Oregon, was sentenced to 120 months in federal prison and five years' supervised release for conspiring to distribute and possess with intent to distribute cocaine and possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime.

According to court documents, between July and August 2017, Ochoa agreed and conspired with co-defendants Gonzalo Manzo, Jr. and Rodolfo Quevedo to send more than 500 grams of cocaine from California to Oregon to sell and distribute to others. During this time, Ochoa and Manzo negotiated a sale of cocaine with an undercover agent from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) in exchange for multiple firearms.

On August 17, 2017, at Manzo's request, Quevedo transported approximately 1000 grams of cocaine from California and delivered it to Ochoa in the Medford area. The firearms and cash were intended to be transported back to California but agents arrested Ochoa and his co-conspirators and the firearms were seized by law enforcement.

This case was investigated by ATF and is being prosecuted by Nathan J. Lichvarcik and Adam E. Delph, Assistant U.S. Attorneys for the District of Oregon.

### ***U.S. v. Lara***

In April 2019, Edwin Enoc Lara, 34, a former campus safety officer at Central Oregon Community College and resident of Bend, Oregon, was sentenced to life in federal prison for kidnapping and carjacking.

According to court documents, between July 24 and July 26, 2016, Lara went on a violent crime spree that left multiple victims and their families in its wake. Early on the morning of July 24, 2016, Lara brutally murdered 23-year-old Bend resident Kaylee Sawyer, a crime for which he would later receive a life sentence in Deschutes County Circuit Court.

After the murder, on July 25, 2016, Lara fled to Salem, Oregon where he carjacked and kidnapped a young woman at gun point. Lara told his victim he was a police officer and showed her news reports about what he had done to Kaylee Sawyer. He then forced her to travel with him to California. Along the way, Lara decided to stop at a hotel in Cottage Grove, Oregon. Inside the hotel room, Lara handcuffed his victim, forced her to take sleeping pills, and made a series of physical advances leading her to believe he might sexually assault her.

A short while later, after receiving a phone call and growing concerned that law enforcement was nearing his location, Lara left the hotel with his victim and continued traveling toward California. At some point during the drive, Lara sought to change vehicles to avoid detection and stopped at two rest areas looking for another vehicle to steal.

In the early morning hours on July 26, 2016, Lara stopped at a motel in Yreka, California where he spotted an elderly man near his vehicle. Lara parked, grabbed his victim by the hand and approached the man. With his gun visible, Lara told the man that he needed his vehicle. When the man wouldn't comply, Lara shot him in the abdomen. At this point, Lara's victim pleaded with him to let her go, but he again grabbed her hand and forced her to flee with him by foot to a nearby gas station.

At the gas station, Lara found his next victims, two young men and their elderly grandmother, sitting inside a vehicle. After threatening to shoot them, Lara entered their vehicle with his Oregon victim and forced them to drive off. During the drive, Lara confessed to his victims that he had an “urge to kill” and had already murdered a young woman in Bend and shot a man in Yreka. Lara eventually dropped his three California victims on the side of the road, again threatened to kill them and continued driving southbound with his Oregon victim. Soon after, California law enforcement caught up with Lara and arrested him.

This case was investigated by the Redmond Police Department, Bend Police Department, Deschutes County Sheriff’s Office, Oregon State Police and other local law enforcement agencies in California with the assistance of the FBI. It was prosecuted by Nathan J. Lichvarcik, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

### *U.S. v. Crane*

In April 2019, Shawn Terrell Crane, 39, of Portland, was sentenced to 168 months in federal prison and three years’ supervised release for conspiring to distribute oxycodone and laundering drug proceeds.

The case against Crane was the result of a lengthy FBI and Portland Police Bureau investigation of a Portland-area drug trafficking organization that included a three-month wiretap of Crane’s cell phones. Crane was the leader of a criminal conspiracy that sourced oxycodone pills from Fresno, California and transported them to Oregon by vehicle and U.S. mail for distribution in and around the Portland metropolitan area.

During the course of the conspiracy, Crane was responsible for distributing more than 30,000 oxycodone pills and arranging for hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash to be deposited into third-party bank accounts to conceal its source. He used violence and the threat of violence to bolster his position of authority within the drug trafficking organization, intimidate competition and achieve his objectives. On one occasion, Crane videotaped himself assaulting and robbing a drug customer while armed with a gun. Crane then sent the video to others, boasting of his willingness to engage in violence without backup from his associates.

The FBI and Portland Police Bureau investigated this case. It was prosecuted by Leah K. Bolstad and Peter D. Sax, Assistant U.S. Attorneys for the District of Oregon.

### *U.S. v. Soares*

In May 2019, Christopher Michael Soares, 35, of Southern Oregon, was sentenced to 160 months in federal prison and five years’ supervised release for possessing with the intent to distribute methamphetamine in Bend, Oregon.

According to court documents, on June 28, 2016, police officers in Bend stopped Soares while he was driving a vehicle with two other occupants. When officers searched Soares’ person, they found 99 grams of methamphetamine, 56 grams of heroin and a 9mm firearm. Soares was later arrested on three separate occasions in Jackson County for additional drug and firearms offenses.

In September 2016, Soares was charged by federal criminal complaint for the June 2018 incident in Bend. He later pleaded guilty to one count of possession with intent to distribute 50 grams or more of methamphetamine. Facing state and federal charges, the parties, including state

prosecutors in Jackson County, agreed to a global resolution to resolve all of Soares' pending criminal cases.

This case was jointly investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Bend Police Department, Medford Police Department and Deschutes County Sheriff's Office. It was prosecuted by Nathan J. Lichvarcik, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

### ***U.S. v. Alston***

In July 2019, Dannie Kay Alston, 67, was sentenced to 110 months in federal prison and three years' supervised release for robbing four Oregon and Southwest Washington banks in a four-week period beginning in August 2017.

On February 21, 2019, Alston pleaded guilty in federal court to the following bank robberies:

- August 7, 2017; Chase Bank in Vancouver, Washington; collecting \$2,300
- August 15, 2017; Wells Fargo Bank in Medford, Oregon; collecting \$4,690
- August 24, 2017; Wells Fargo Bank in Salem, Oregon; collecting \$1,317
- September 9, 2017; First Interstate Bank in Roseburg, Oregon; collecting \$3,441

In each of his robberies, Alston attempted to disguise his identity by wearing sunglasses and some type of ball or ski cap. He communicated with the targeted bank tellers primarily through handwritten notes or signs. At his last robbery, in Roseburg, witnesses were able to provide a description of Alston's getaway vehicle, leading to his quick arrest by the Oregon State Police. Police recovered the note used in the Roseburg robbery, a starter's pistol with loaded caps, a Taser, sunglasses, wig and \$3,441 cash from Alston's person and vehicle.

Alston is a career offender with a criminal history spanning five decades and four states. He has previous burglary convictions in California and Texas, robbery convictions in California, Florida and Oregon, as well as assault, theft and narcotics convictions.

This case was investigated by the FBI, Clark County Washington Sheriff's Office, Medford Police Department, Oregon State Police and Roseburg Police Department. It was prosecuted by Pamela Paaso, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

### ***U.S. v. Caro-Gonzalez***

In August 2019, Rodrigo Caro-Gonzalez, 35, a noted drug trafficker residing in Eagle Point, Oregon, was sentenced to 120 months in federal prison and five years' supervised release for conspiring to distribute methamphetamine and illegally possessing a firearm.

According to court documents, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) began investigating Caro-Gonzalez in May 2016. A few months later, based on a tip, the Oregon State Police (OSP) stopped a car driven by one of Caro-Gonzalez's associates carrying more than 30 pounds of methamphetamine. The investigation of Caro-Gonzalez continued when, in March 2017, a person believed to have obtained methamphetamine from Caro-Gonzalez was stopped with approximately 16 pounds of methamphetamine.

Later in March 2017, a confidential source met with Caro-Gonzalez and a third associate. The group arranged a drug deal. The deal never occurred, but the associate was arrested a few days

later with more than five pounds of methamphetamine. The DEA then executed a search warrant at Caro-Gonzalez's Eagle Point residence and seized \$9,585, an AK-style firearm, a thirty-round magazine, a pistol and ammunition. Caro-Gonzalez admitted to being in the U.S. illegally, making his possession of the weapons unlawful.

This case was investigated by DEA, the Springfield Police Department, INET and OSP and prosecuted by Jeffrey Sweet, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

#### *U.S. v. Friesen*

In August 2019, Michael James Friesen, 33, of Prineville, Oregon, was sentenced to 18 months in federal prison and three years' supervised release for conspiracy to transfer and unlawful possession of a machine gun.

According to court documents, between May and June 2018, Friesen agreed to broker the sale of a Guide Lamp, Model M3A1, .45 ACP caliber machine gun for co-defendant John Widener Jordan, 38, also of Prineville. Between May 30 and June 5, Friesen discussed the sale price of the firearm with an undercover agent from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) posing as a potential purchaser. Friesen confirmed for the agent that he had seen the firearm function as a machine gun.

On June 6, Friesen met the undercover agent in a motel room in Prineville. Shortly thereafter, Jordan brought the firearm to the motel room and completed the transaction in exchange for \$3,000 in cash. Jordan in turn paid Friesen for arranging the sale.

This case was investigated by the ATF and is being prosecuted by Nathan J. Lichvarcik, Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon.

#### *U.S. v. Walsh*

In September 2019, Jon Michael Walsh, 46, of Neskowin, Oregon, was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison and 10 years' supervised release for possessing with intent to distribute methamphetamine and heroin and illegally possessing a firearm as a convicted felon.

According to court documents, in February 2018, Walsh was on post-prison supervision for a 2015 federal firearms conviction, when probation officers conducted a routine search of his vehicle outside a community center and found a stolen loaded pistol and concealed packages of methamphetamine and heroin.

During a subsequent search of Walsh's Neskowin residence, officers found additional distribution quantities of methamphetamine and heroin. Walsh later admitted to buying and selling methamphetamine and heroin in Lincoln and surrounding coastal counties to support his own methamphetamine addiction.

Walsh previously served nine years in federal prison for distributing methamphetamine while in possession of a firearm after being sentenced in June 1998.

This case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Oregon State Police, Tillamook County Sheriff's Office and the Lincoln City Police Department. It was prosecuted by Frank R. Papagni, Jr., Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon, and Michelle Branam, Lincoln County District Attorney.

### ***U.S. v. Fuller***

In September 2019, Tyler Wayne Fuller, 30, of Madras, Oregon, was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison and three years' supervised release for his role in a Central Oregon methamphetamine distribution conspiracy and for robbing a Madras bank.

According to court documents, Fuller is the son of career criminal and known drug dealer Ronald Wayne Thrasher, 49, also of Madras. By age 28, Fuller had his own extensive criminal history and had spent the majority of his adulthood incarcerated. In December 2016, after Fuller was released from federal prison, Thrasher began giving his son methamphetamine to sell. Within a month, Thrasher was supplying and Fuller was distributing quarter and half-pound quantities of methamphetamine throughout Central Oregon.

In February 2017, Fuller's volatile relationship with his father led to a confrontation. Armed with a pistol, Fuller unsuccessfully attempted to rob his father of his methamphetamine supply. The resulting estrangement left Fuller without a supplier and illicit income. Now homeless, he continued selling drugs obtained from his father's customers. In August 2017, Fuller robbed a U.S. Bank in Madras, collecting \$517 in cash.

Thrasher was convicted at trial in August 2019 for purchasing and transporting methamphetamine for distribution and being a felon in possession of a firearm. He will be sentenced on February 4, 2020. Fuller is the first of 11 defendants to be sentenced for their involvement in his father's drug trafficking conspiracy.

This case was investigated by Central Oregon Drug Enforcement (CODE), the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) and the Oregon State Police. It was prosecuted Frank R. Papagni Jr. and Judi Harper, Assistant U.S. Attorneys for the District of Oregon, with the assistance of the Jefferson, Crook and Deschutes County District Attorney's Offices.

### ***U.S. v. Rhodes et al.***

In September 2019, the U.S. Attorney's Office announced the indictment of two Hoover Criminal Gang members for the 2015 murder of Portland resident Kyle Polk.

The indictment alleges that on December 16, 2015, Javier Fernando Hernandez, 23, and Ronald Clayton Rhodes, 34, both of Portland, murdered Kyle Polk for the purpose of maintaining and increasing their positions in the Hoover Criminal Gang, a criminal enterprise engaged in racketeering in California, Oregon, Washington and elsewhere.

Hernandez and Rhodes are both charged with murder in aid of racketeering, using and carrying a firearm during a crime of violence, and causing the death of Polk through the use of a firearm and will stand trial together. Murder in aid of racketeering carries a maximum sentence of death or life in prison.

This case was investigated by the FBI, the Portland Police Bureau, Multnomah County Sheriff's Office and Homeland Security Investigations and is being prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon.

These enforcement actions and partnerships are part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce

violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. The Department of Justice reinvigorated PSN in 2017 as part of the Department's renewed focus on targeting violent criminals, directing all U.S. Attorney's Offices to work in partnership with federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and the local community to develop effective, locally based strategies to reduce violent crime. To learn more about Project Safe Neighborhoods, go to [www.justice.gov/psn](http://www.justice.gov/psn).

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