

Billings man admits trafficking crime after law enforcement seize 10 pounds of meth from vehicle

BILLINGS — A Billings man suspected of breaking into the Drug Enforcement Administration's garage and entering his impounded vehicle from which agents had seized approximately 10 pounds of methamphetamine admitted to a trafficking crime today, U.S. Attorney Leif M. Johnson said.

Anthony Jacob Johnson, 43, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to distribute meth. Johnson faces a mandatory minimum of 10 years to life in prison, a \$10 million fine and at least five years of supervised release.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Timothy J. Cavan presided. A sentencing date will be set before U.S. District Judge Dana L. Christensen. The court will determine any sentence after considering the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors. Johnson was detained pending further proceedings.

The government alleged in court documents that in January 2021, Montana Division of Criminal Investigation agents began investigating co-defendant, Stacie Thein, for meth distribution. Thein has pleaded not guilty to charges. The investigation led to Johnson as Thein's source. Agents determined that Johnson traveled to Colorado in March and again in April 2021. Upon Johnson's return to Montana, a Montana Highway Patrol trooper conducted a traffic stop of Johnson's vehicle. A search warrant was served on the vehicle, and agents located 10 vacuumed sealed bricks of meth. The bricks totaled approximately 10.39 pounds of meth, which is the equivalent of about 37,653 doses. The next day, the DEA discovered a large hole in a garage door at its facility. Evidence showed that Johnson had gone to the facility the night before, cut a large hole in the garage and entered his seized vehicle while it was in DEA's custody. Johnson admitted to agents that he was distributing large amounts of meth he obtained from a source in Denver, Colorado.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Julie R. Patten is prosecuting the case, which was investigated by the DEA and Montana Division of Criminal Investigation.

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, a U.S. Department of Justice initiative to reduce violent crime. Through PSN, federal, tribal, state and local law enforcement partners in Montana focus on violent crime driven by methamphetamine trafficking, armed robbers, firearms offenses and violent offenders with outstanding warrants.