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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **SIGNIFICANT METHAMPHETAMINE DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION IN SOUTHEASTERN PA REGION DISMANTLED;**

***83 pounds of meth, 200 bags of fentanyl, 25 firearms and more than \$135,000 cash were seized during the arrests***



**TYRONE BAKER JR.**



**RICKY EVANS**



**JHAMIR WINANS**



**JOSHUA QUILES**



**SHAKEEM JOHNSON**

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NORRISTOWN, Pa. (April 5, 2022) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele, U.S. Postal Inspection Service Postal Inspector in Charge Damon Wood, Homeland Security Investigations Acting Special Agent in Charge in Philadelphia William S. Walker, Lower Merion Township Police Superintendent Michael J. McGrath and Upper Merion Township Police Chief Thomas Nolan announce the dismantling of a major drug trafficking organization that was supplying the Southeastern Pennsylvania region and beyond with methamphetamine, that was shipped from Los Angeles to the leaders of the group in the Philadelphia area. Investigators found that this drug trafficking organization is believed to have been responsible for the distribution of approximately 800 pounds of crystal methamphetamine since 2019, as well as the trafficking of other illegal drugs, including fentanyl and oxycodone.

Five leaders of the drug trafficking organization were arrested on March 15, 2022 during a vast sweep: **Tyrone Baker**, 29, of East Lansdowne; **Shakeem Johnson**, 27, of Philadelphia; **Joshua Quiles**, 31, of King of Prussia; **Jhamir Winans**, 21, of Exton; and **Ricky Evans**, 28, of Los Angeles, who was arrested that day and extradited to

Montgomery County. An additional three sub-dealers and other members of the drug trafficking organization have also been arrested.

The investigation into this significant drug trafficking organization began with the arrest of drug trafficker Chase Smith, 29, of Upper Darby, in March 2021 after Smith sold more than two pounds of methamphetamine to an undercover officer in Lower Merion Township. Law enforcement then learned that Smith was part of a large-scale methamphetamine drug trafficking organization that supplied not only Montgomery County and the Philadelphia area, but also reached into New Jersey, Maryland and West Virginia.

That arrest led to the launching of this criminal investigation, which included physical surveillance, search warrants and multiple court orders for phone records, Pen Registers, GPS pings and court-ordered wire intercepts for multiple phone numbers. The intensive investigation revealed that Baker, Quiles, Winans, Johnson and others connected to their drug trafficking organization were acquiring large quantities of methamphetamine from supplier Evans in Los Angeles. These large quantities of drugs were being shipped by Evans to these four defendants and others involved in the conspiracy, via the United States Postal Service, FedEx and UPS from different post office locations, UPS Stores and other shipping stores. Significant amounts of money were exchanged from the four Philadelphia-area defendants to Evans to pay for the methamphetamine he sent to the group. Primarily, these monetary payments were made using the cellphone application CashApp. From March 2021 to March 2022, more than \$86,000 was sent to Evans by the four other defendants using CashApp.

During the course of the investigation, it was learned of a parallel investigation by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and Homeland Security Investigations, which has been incorporated into the criminal charges the defendants now face. The USPIS and HSI investigation identified 91 packages shipped between October 2019 and December 2021 that matched the pattern associated with this drug trafficking organization with mailing or a return address in the Los Angeles and Philadelphia areas. Fifteen of the 91 packages were seized by law enforcement, and all contained methamphetamine, totaling approximately 60 pounds.

All told, this drug trafficking organization is believed to have been responsible for illegally trafficking more than 800 pounds of methamphetamine in Southeastern Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland and West Virginia, as well as trafficking other illegal drugs that includes fentanyl, oxycodone and marijuana.

At the conclusion of the investigation, multiple search warrants were executed in Montgomery, Chester, Delaware and Philadelphia counties, as well as Camden County, N.J.; Clarksburg, W.V. and Los Angeles, Calif. Law enforcement seized 83 pounds of crystal methamphetamine, 200 baggies of fentanyl, 100 oxycodone pills, 17 handguns and eight long-guns (including one “Ghost gun” and four that were stolen—one had an obliterated serial number that was able to be raised), a ballistics vest and approximately \$135,000 in cash. The 83 pounds of crystal methamphetamine, if sold as single doses on the street, is worth between \$2.6 million and \$3.7 million.

“Montgomery County Detectives and police officers partnered with numerous local, state and federal law enforcement to identify the extent of the illegal activities of this

criminal enterprise. By partnering with U.S. Postal Inspection Service and Homeland Security Investigations, we were able to track these shipments and interdict significant quantities of methamphetamine that did not reach the region's streets, thereby saving lives," said DA Steele. "Drug traffickers need to know that law enforcement in this area is committed to stopping the flow of all illegal drugs in Montgomery County—whether that poison is significant quantities of methamphetamine, heroin/fentanyl or other drugs. The investigation resulting in these five arrests shut off a significant pipeline for methamphetamine to the entire Southeastern Pennsylvania region, and our communities are safer for it."

This investigation was led by the Montgomery County Detective Bureau in conjunction with the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) and Homeland Security Investigations (HSI). Assistance was provided to the investigation and/or in executing the arrests by the Delaware County Criminal Investigations Division; Pennsylvania State Police's Bureau of Criminal Investigation Southeast Strike Force; Drug Enforcement Agency—Group 32 Philadelphia Division and Group 2 Los Angeles Division; Upper Merion Police Department; Lower Merion Police Department; Upper Darby Police Department; Philadelphia Police Department IDIS; Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General; Camden County (N.J.) Police Department; and the Harrison County (W.V.) Drug Task Force.

Jeremiah Daley, executive director of the Liberty Mid-Atlantic High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), noted the increasing sophistication of drug traffickers. "Multi-state drug trafficking is not new, however, the sophistication of drug trafficking organizations has made investigating and dismantling them much more challenging as they often receive and distribute controlled substances by parcel services and transfer funds using encrypted electronic payment systems across the country with relative anonymity and ease," said Daley. "This multi-agency investigation is an example of how the partnership among local, state and federal law enforcement can effectively identify, investigate and disrupt the flow of drugs across state and county lines, remove drugs and firearms, and strip traffickers of illegally-obtained profits. We congratulate our partners at the Montgomery County Detective Bureau, Homeland Security Investigations, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and Drug Enforcement Administration for the excellent cooperative effort that brought down a significant methamphetamine and opioid trafficking ring."

The cross-country drug trafficking organization was identified through diligent work by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service in conjunction with Homeland Security Investigations. "Inspectors from the Postal Inspection Service and its task force officers, identify, interdict and investigate the shipment of illegal narcotics through the United States Postal Service every day. Using the United States mail to ship illegal narcotics is as old as the mail system, and the threat it poses to the United States Postal Service employees, customers and the citizens of the United States remains constant," said Wood, Postal Inspector in Charge in Philadelphia. "We don't have to look far to see the destruction that illegal narcotics have on our communities. Consequently, inspectors from the Philadelphia Division will always look to work with our partners in law enforcement to marshal resources and knowledge to build impactful cases against the organizations that profit off that harm. While stopping and removing shipments of illegal narcotics is important, like any business, losing some product can be absorbed into the cost of doing business. Significant time behind bars,

however, is a harder cost to absorb. I want to thank the prosecutors and detectives from the Montgomery County District Attorney's Office, the agents from Homeland Security Investigations and the investigators and officers from the other agencies who helped develop this investigation. While law enforcement won't solve the ills of illegal narcotics alone, law enforcement agencies working together is how law enforcement will maximize its effectiveness in the fight against illegal narcotics."

Homeland Security Investigations SAC Walker also noted the importance of these types of collaborative investigations. "Deadly drugs like those seized during this case continue to destroy lives and ravage communities. Too many families have been touched by the tragic consequences of addiction and overdose," said Homeland Security Investigations' SAC Walker. "The dismantling of this trafficking organization was only possible through the extraordinary collaboration between law enforcement agencies. While our work is far from done, these partnerships are the first step to holding accountable those who perpetuate the influx of methamphetamines and opioids into Pennsylvania's neighborhoods."

Each defendant is charged with more than 100 felony counts of Corrupt Organization, Conspiracy, Possession With Intent to Deliver, Dealing in the Proceeds of Unlawful Activities, Criminal Use of a Communications Facility and other related charges. Four of the defendants were arraigned on March 16, 2022, by Magisterial District Judge Maurice H. Saylor. Defendant bail amounts were set at: Baker \$3 million cash, Winans \$3 million cash, Johnson \$1 million cash and Quiles \$1 million cash. Evans arrived in Montgomery County on April 3, 2022 and was arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Edward Levine, who set bail at \$3 million cash. All defendants were remanded to the Montgomery County Correctional Facility.

A preliminary hearing for the defendants is scheduled for 8 a.m., May 11, 2022 before Magisterial District Judge Patrick O. Krouse. The case will be prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Allison Ruth, Captain of the HIDTA Unit, and Assistant District Attorney Gabrielle Hughes.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

*CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.*