



Everything New Orleans

Arrests are called blow to drug trade

Nine in Central City 'core group' face 31-count federal indictment

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New Orleans police and federal law enforcement agents announced Monday that they have shut down an open-air drug market in Central City with the indictment of nine men, some of whom were caught on the city's surveillance cameras firing weapons in front of a house on Second Street.

Seven of the nine were in custody by Monday.

U.S. Attorney Jim Letten said the drug trafficking was concentrated between Washington Avenue and Philip Street and between Carondelet Street and Loyola Avenue.

"We expect to see immediate results in the quality of life in that particular area," said Capt. Robert Bardy, commander of the New Orleans Police Department's 6th District, which includes Central City.

Bardy thinks removing the nine suspects from the streets will go a long way toward cleaning up crime in Central City, described in the indictment as a " 'hot spot' for drug, gun and violent crime activity."

"This was probably the core group in that particular area," Bardy said.

Indicted were Leroy "Juice" Carter, Eddie Chaney, Tony "Boochie" Jones, Kentron "Tron" Matthieu, Michael "Pie" Randolph, Travis Randolph, Jereme "Skinny" Thomas, Jeremiah "Fat" Thomas and Ronnell "Poppa" Vallery.

The 31-count indictment charges the men with conspiracy to distribute crack, cocaine, heroin and marijuana; conspiracy to use firearms to further drug-trafficking activity; using a house at 1910 Second St. as a base of operations for their drug business; and various other violations of federal narcotics and gun laws.

The indictment was returned Friday, and by Monday afternoon all but Carter and Jones had been arrested. All but Carter have felony drug convictions.

New Orleans police worked in hand in hand with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives to gather evidence to charge the nine men, officials said.

Police said they caught some of the firearms offenses using cameras that city government has installed in crime hot spots.

The two Randolphs were caught on video on March 9 bringing an assault weapon out of 1910 Second St., trying to fire it at someone who was fleeing in a car and then going back into the house with the weapon, officials said.

Also caught on tape with the city camera was Jereme Thomas, officials said. Police said they got

images of him firing a handgun at a passing car while he stood in front of the Second Street house.

New Orleans Police Superintendent Warren Riley said he's confident that the nine men named in the indictment "will not be out of jail anytime soon."

Bardy commended the citizens of Central City, saying they have one of the most proactive Neighborhood Watch groups in town.

Letten said New Orleans citizens in general seem to be responding to the ATF's recent revival of its hotline to report people with guns.

"Citizens are our eyes and ears," Letten said.

If convicted, Jones, Matthieu, Michael Randolph, Jeremiah Thomas and Vallery face mandatory life sentences because of their criminal records, Letten said.

Chaney, Travis Randolph and, Jereme Thomas, if convicted, each will face a mandatory minimum sentence of 20 years and a possible maximum of life in prison. Leroy Carter will face a minimum of 10 years and a maximum of life behind bars, Letten said.