

Violent Fayetteville Fentanyl Trafficker Sentenced to 35 years

Wednesday, July 12, 2023

Share

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, Eastern District of North Carolina

NEW BERN, N.C. – A Fayetteville man was sentenced today to 420 months in prison for his role as the leader of a violent fentanyl, cocaine, and heroin trafficking organization. On January 11, 2023, Naji Michael Johnson, age 45, pled guilty to fentanyl conspiracy and fentanyl distribution charges.

"Naji Johnson used guns, violence, and intimidation to advance his drug trafficking enterprise in Fayetteville for 15 years, pushing kilogram quantities of cocaine, heroin, and fentanyl into our communities," said U.S. Attorney Michael Easley. "Today, the community saw justice done. Drug traffickers should see this 35 year sentence as a warning. Partnerships between local and federal law enforcement are stronger than ever, and we are determined to keep North Carolina safe. Our friends, neighbors, and families deserve no less."

"The sentencing of Naji Johnson supports the Fayetteville Police Department's commitment and goal of keeping the City of Fayetteville safe and secure," said Fayetteville Police Chief Kem Braden. "Naji Johnson was a career criminal responsible for numerous violent crimes in our community. The Fayetteville Police Department appreciates the hard work of the Federal, State, and local agencies responsible for removing a violent, career criminal from our community. The sentencing of Naji Johnson sends a clear message to other would-be criminals that violence within our City will not be tolerated."

"There is often a direct link between those trafficking drugs into our communities and those committing violent crimes," said ATF Special Agent in Charge Bennie Mims. "Disrupting these dangerous drug trafficking networks has an immediate and significant role in decreasing violent gun crime."

According to court documents and other information presented in court, various law enforcement agencies in the Fayetteville area have received statements from individuals throughout the last decade indicating that Johnson was a kilogram level supplier of cocaine, crack, heroin, and fentanyl in Cumberland County. Information compiled throughout the investigation revealed that between late 2018 and his federal arrest in August 2022, Johnson was responsible for distributing over 19,000 grams of fentanyl, which is enough fentanyl to create over 950,000 doses.

The investigation also revealed that Johnson utilized firearms and violence to maintain his position at the top of the Fayetteville drug trafficking hierarchy. Investigators received numerous accounts indicating that Johnson routinely robbed other area drug dealers. Investigators also received statements indicating that Johnson was involved in multiple murders stemming from drug trafficking activity, and that Johnson kidnapped another drug dealer to collect drugs and drug proceeds as ransom. Johnson also possessed a firearm during two separate controlled purchases of fentanyl that were conducted in 2022 as part of the investigation.

The investigation into Johnson was part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) investigation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level drug traffickers, money launderers, gangs, and transnational criminal organizations that threaten the United States by using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach that leverages the strengths of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies against criminal networks.

Michael Easley, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina made the announcement after sentencing by U.S. District Judge Louise W. Flanagan. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Fayetteville Police Department, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Drug Enforcement Administration investigated the case and Assistant U.S. Attorney Caroline Webb prosecuted the case.

Related court documents and information can be found on the website of the [U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina](#) or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 5:22-CR-00195-FL-1 .