

Granite City man sentenced for possession, intent to distribute meth

December 17 2015 3:25 PM



ST. LOUIS - James L. Porter, Acting United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that **Billy Joe Merchant, age 43, of Granite City** was sentenced on Thursday, December 17, 2015 to 70 months in federal prison for possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

Merchant pled guilty to the federal charge on May 8, 2015 in U.S. District Court in East St. Louis, Illinois. At the time when he pled guilty, Merchant admitted that he had possessed approximately 30 grams of unusually pure crystal "ICE" methamphetamine at his Granite City mobile home on February 6, 2015. Merchant also admitted that he had

intended to sell the methamphetamine which he possessed. ICE often sells for as much as \$100 per gram.

Merchant has been continuously confined in federal custody since March 3, 2015. When he is released from his federal prison sentence, Merchant will also have to complete a term of three years of supervised release.

Merchant's arrest and prosecution was one part of a joint federal/state law enforcement initiative to address the problem of methamphetamine distribution in the Granite City, Illinois area. Evidence in support of this prosecution was obtained in an investigation which was conducted under the auspices of the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF). The OCDETF initiative is designed to bring federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and resources together to identify, target and dismantle large national and international drug trafficking organizations.

The investigation which led to Merchant's arrest and conviction was conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the Metropolitan Enforcement Group of Southwestern Illinois (MEGSI), and the Granite City Police Department.

The case is assigned to Assistant United States Attorney Robert L. Garrison.