

Traffic Stop In Madison Co.: Semi Driver Caught With 40 Kilograms of Illegal Drugs Is Sentenced

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EAST ST. LOUIS – A district judge sentenced a semitrailer driver to 12 years in federal prison after he admitted to hauling nearly 40 kilograms of heroin, fentanyl, meth and cocaine through Southern Illinois.

Ledaniel Russell, 50, of Fort Worth, Texas, pleaded guilty to one count of possession with intent to distribute a controlled substance: heroin, fentanyl, meth and cocaine. "Heroin, fentanyl, meth and cocaine all have a dangerous history of infecting individuals and causing harm in communities due to the war on drugs," said U.S. Attorney Rachelle Aud Crowe.

"I commend the Illinois State Police for interrupting this drug trafficking operation and having the training to detect semitrailer drivers with illegitimate agendas."

Troopers with the Illinois State Police conducted a traffic stop on a semitrailer driven by Russell along Interstate 70 in Madison County on Sept. 15, 2022. Following a search of Russell's trailer, troopers located two large duffel bags concealing a kilogram of heroin, 4.5 kilograms of fentanyl, almost 32 kilograms of meth and nearly 2 kilograms of cocaine.

"The Illinois State Police is committed to stopping illegal drug traffickers and keeping dangerous drugs from flooding and hurting our communities," said ISP Director Brendan F. Kelly. "Whether it's a trooper on the road or a special agent investigating, ISP is targeting drug traffickers and will continue to work with the U.S. Attorney's Office to put them behind bars."

In an interview with law enforcement, Russell admitted he planned to deliver the drugs to Michigan, after he stopped in Indiana to deliver his truck's legitimate cargo. In addition to the 12-year prison sentence, Russell will serve five years of supervised release. "We know our nations' freeways are the arteries that bring Mexican cartels' illegal drugs into our communities," said Assistant Special Agent in Charge Joseph Dixon, head of Drug Enforcement Administration investigations in southern Illinois.

"DEA, working in lockstep with our partners from the Illinois State Police, will continue to be laser-focused on targeting, disrupting and dismantling the pipelines used to transport deadly drugs so they don't impact the health and safety of our citizens." The Illinois State Police and DEA led the investigation. Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel S. Carraway prosecuted the case.