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Press Release

Ten years for leader of Fentanyl Trafficking organization

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The Randolph man at the center of a sprawling fentanyl, cocaine, and oxycodone trafficking organization spanning three Massachusetts counties has admitted his guilt and been sentenced to 10 years in State Prison, according to Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey.

The Randolph Police Department partnered with the South Shore Drug Task Force (including officers from Randolph, Braintree, Quincy, Canton, Dedham, Boston, Weymouth, Milton, and Holbrook), the DEA, the Norfolk County Sheriff's Office, and the Norfolk District Attorney's Office to investigate that organization in 2017.

On March 21, 2023, Carl H. French, age 43, believed to be the head of that organization, entered a plea of guilty to Trafficking Oxycodone, Trafficking Fentanyl, and Four counts of Conspiracy. Judge Beverly Cannone imposed the agreed-upon sentence of 10 years in state prison. Charges related to money laundering and unlawful possession of ammunition were dismissed.

The investigation, which detectives called **"Operation French Connection" resulted in 15 arrests – including French's brother Alex French - in multiple communities and the seizure of substantial** amounts of drugs and cash – including \$50,000 found in a mechanical hide installed in Carl French's 2012 Honda Accord.

"Randolph Police and their partner agencies put tremendous time and resources into this investigation, resulting in 200 officers from numerous agencies executing search warrants on 18 residences across the south shore and in Boston," District Attorney Morrissey said. "Thousands of pills containing oxycodone and fentanyl – two of the drugs driving the opioid overdose epidemic – were among the substances seized."

The investigation included the execution of a series of court-approved wiretap warrants on seven phones being used by Carl French and two defendants.

Two co-defendants died while their charges were pending – Felix Valdes and Vincent Bonanno. Romero Andrade pled guilty to multiple charges on March 3, 2023 and was sentenced to 6 to 8 years in State Prison. James Laureus admitted guilt in February 2019 and was sentenced to 10 to 12 years. Michael Berube won a motion to suppress evidence on his trafficking charge and eventually pled guilty to conspiracy and was sentenced to 3 years of probation. Octavio Nares admitted to possession with intent to distribute cocaine in January 2019 and received a sentence of 2.5 in the house of corrections with 18 months to serve. Jonathan Langston, Shante Green, Tyrone Thompson, and Hashanna Williams had their cases dismissed or dropped.

"This prosecution has been complex because of the number of defendants, the investigative techniques used, and the activity in multiple jurisdictions," District Attorney Morrissey said. "Because the known activities of several co-defendants occurred exclusively in other counties, both the Plymouth and Suffolk District Attorneys agreed to appoint the prosecutor on the matter, Assistant Norfolk District Attorney Keith J. McCray, as a special prosecutor in Suffolk and Plymouth Counties."

The cases against Gary Elliott, Alex French, Jeffrey Joseph, and Jeff Graham remain pending; the guilty pleas of their associates does not impinge on the Constitutional presumption of innocence of those whose cases remain pending.

Alex French is due in Norfolk Superior Court on April 21.