

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Drug cartel courier sentenced to prison for trafficking in Cherokee County –
More than 17 pounds of meth found in his home
State vs. James Aaron Aldred IV**

November 30, 2023 – Cherokee County District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that James Aaron Aldred IV, 36, of Canton, is now serving a lengthy prison sentence after pleading guilty to manufacturing, trafficking, and selling methamphetamine.

Aldred pled guilty to all three charges in a negotiated guilty plea entered on August 17, 2023. He was sentenced to 45 years, with the first 25 years to serve in prison and the remainder to serve on probation. The prosecution of this case was closed earlier this month when a co-defendant pled guilty to lesser charges and was sentenced.

Charges stem from an investigation that started in January 2023 when the Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad (CMANS) became aware of a multi-state drug trafficking organization involving individuals traveling from Tennessee to Cherokee County, Georgia, to pick up large quantities of methamphetamine for distribution to northern Tennessee and southern Virginia. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) identified Aldred as the Cherokee County drug courier who handled the methamphetamine prior to it being transported.

After receiving DEA intelligence, CMANS began closely monitoring Aldred and observed as he conducted large drug transactions in a Kroger parking lot on Marietta Highway in Canton. CMANS undercover agents also purchased methamphetamine directly from Aldred in a controlled narcotics transaction.

On April 19, 2023, CMANS agents conducted a search warrant of Aldred's home, where they located nearly 8 pounds of methamphetamine in multiple Ziploc bags in a bathroom shower and bedroom. Agents also found a methamphetamine conversion lab in the upstairs of the home, where four pitchers were filled with nearly 10 pounds of liquid methamphetamine, which was in the process of being converted into a solid substance for sale.

During the investigation, CMANS learned that Aldred worked at the direction of a drug cartel, purchasing and selling large quantities of illegal narcotics and interacting with both buyers and suppliers. Aldred would handle 12-25 kilos of methamphetamine at a time. Digital evidence confirmed that Aldred was working for a cartel, which was headed by a federal inmate currently incarcerated for selling methamphetamine.

“Not only is this a staggering amount of methamphetamine, but more alarming is that these drugs were being sold in public locations. This defendant endangered innocent citizens who had no idea that a drug cartel was operating within our community,” said Assistant District Attorney Megan S. Hertel, who prosecuted this case on behalf of the State. “This case is an excellent example of the importance of collaborations among agencies, in this case, a federal agency and a local agency, which resulted in shutting down a major pipeline of drugs into our community, and beyond.”

Superior Court Judge Shannon Wallace sentenced Aldred, as negotiated, to 45 years, with the first 25 years to serve in prison and the remainder to serve on probation. Aldred must also complete 200 hours of community service and pay court costs and fines totaling \$1,850,055.

“This sentence ensures that another drug trafficker stays off our streets, where he is no longer able to spread dangerous drugs,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. “CMANS did a phenomenal job in investigating this case and bringing this defendant to justice. With drug trafficking organizations now in communities across the country, it is important that we remain vigilant and work together to dismantle these cartels.”

This case was investigated by the Cherokee Multi-Agency Narcotics Squad (CMANS) and the Cherokee Sheriff’s Office. It was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Megan S. Hertel, of the Gang/Organized Crime Unit, Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.