

August 24, 2012

GUILTY VERDICT IN SYNTHETIC DRUGS CASE

BISMARCK, ND – The state’s prosecution of a Bismarck business owner accused of selling synthetic cannabinoids ended today with a guilty verdict. William “Big Willie” Nickel was found guilty of Conspiracy to Deliver a Controlled Substance, a class B felony, for which the maximum penalty is 10 years and/or a \$10,000 fine.

“Today’s verdict is a lesson to others who are selling these potentially fatal substances, that we will find them and we will vigorously prosecute them,” said Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem.

In October 2011, law enforcement was called to a local Mandan shipping company for a suspicious package. The package contained 315 containers of a synthetic cannabinoid. Lab testing confirmed the synthetic cannabinoid was controlled. Ryan Zueger and William Nickel, who operated “Big Willie’s ATT,” had purchased over 2,000 containers of the same synthetic cannabinoid within a month and had sold all but 315 containers. They were both charged and convicted of Conspiracy to Deliver a Controlled Substance.

“These and other synthetic drugs sold as an alternative to banned substances have resulted in a significant increase in emergency room visits by people who have used them,” said Stenehjem. “Synthetic drugs are also linked to the death of a young man in northeast North Dakota earlier this summer.”

Sale of synthetic drugs, often marketed as bath salts and labeled as not for human consumption, has been illegal since 2011, when the compounds were added to the list of controlled substances.

A sentencing hearing will be held at the Morton County courthouse on October 30, 2012, at 1:30 pm.

Assistant Attorneys General Julie Lawyer and Paul Emerson prosecuted the case.

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