

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
WESTERN DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,	)	
	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
	)	
v.	)	No. 09-00121-08-CR-W-DGK
	)	
Ernest Harold Sneddon,	)	
	)	
Defendant.	)	

PLEA AGREEMENT

Pursuant to Rule 11(c)(1)(B) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, the parties described below have entered into the following plea agreement:

**1. The Parties.** The parties to this agreement are the United States Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Missouri (otherwise referred to as “the Government” or “the United States”), represented by Beth Phillips, United States Attorney, and Bruce Rhoades, Assistant United States Attorney, and the defendant, Ernest Harold Sneddon (“the defendant”), represented by John G. Gromowsky.

The defendant understands and agrees that this plea agreement is only between him and the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, and that it does not bind any other federal, state, or local prosecution authority or any other government agency, unless otherwise specified in this agreement.

**2. Defendant's Guilty Plea.** The defendant agrees to and hereby does plead guilty to the lesser included charge in Count Two of the indictment now charging the defendant with a violation of 21 U.S.C. §§ 841(a)(1)(b)(1)(B) and 846, that is, conspiracy to distribute fifty (50) grams or more of methamphetamine and to Count Thirteen of the indictment charging him with a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1956(a)(1)(A)(i) and (h), that is conspiracy to commit money laundering. By entering into this plea agreement, the defendant admits that he knowingly committed these offenses, and is in fact guilty of these offenses.

**3. Factual Basis for Guilty Plea.** The parties agree that the evidence the Government would admit at trial to prove the offense to which the defendant is pleading guilty is as follows:

This is a historical conspiracy with approximately a pound of methamphetamine seized in 2006. This case grew out of three other cases indicted in 2007 and 2006 in Kansas City, MO, Jefferson City, MO and the District of KS.

Following a series of arrests, statements of defendants and others, and various law enforcement investigations, it was discovered that defendant Lara-Ruiz aka Hill (previously convicted in the Jefferson City case) was distributing methamphetamine, directly and through others, to a number of individuals from the St. Joseph area.

Between November 28, 2007 and January 15, 2009, 25 statements were taken that directly impacted this case. Those statements came from four defendants previously indicted and convicted in federal court with methamphetamine distribution conspiracies, from four defendants charged in this case and from three people involved in this case that are not charged. Those statements set out that Hill was distributing methamphetamine through defendant Gutierrez and others to everyone indicted herein. Most of the defendants herein were in direct dealings with Hill at one point or another.

From those 25 statements, the amount of methamphetamine distributed in total is approximately 100 pounds. The amount actually distributed by or to each defendant ranges from several ounces to several kilos. Based on drugs bought directly by them, sold in their presence, seen packaged or in bulk, each defendant is directly or foreseeably liable for no less than the statutory minimum amount to which they are now charged.

The money laundering conspiracy is based on cash (obtained from drug sales or otherwise) paid by defendants for the methamphetamine they bought (and then distributed), upon vehicles and guns traded for methamphetamine, and upon items taken as trade for either methamphetamine or drug debt reduction.

**4. Use of Factual Admissions and Relevant Conduct.** The defendant acknowledges, understands and agrees that the any admissions contained in this plea agreement will be used for the purpose of determining his guilt and advisory sentencing range under the United States Sentencing Guidelines (“U.S.S.G.”), including the calculation of the defendant’s offense level in accordance with U.S.S.G. § 1B1.3(a)(2). The defendant acknowledges, understands and agrees that the conduct charged in any dismissed counts of the indictment as well as all other uncharged related criminal activity may be considered as “relevant conduct” pursuant to U.S.S.G. § 1B1.3(a)(2) in calculating the offense level for the charges to which he is pleading guilty.

**5. Statutory Penalties.** The defendant understands that upon his plea of guilty to the lesser included charge in Count Two of the indictment now charging him with conspiracy to distribute fifty (50) grams or more of methamphetamine, the minimum penalty the Court may impose is five (5) years imprisonment, while the maximum penalty the Court may impose is not more than 40 years of imprisonment. The maximum fine is \$2,000,000.00, and the court shall impose not less than four (4) years of supervised release and a \$100 mandatory special assessment which must be paid in full at the time of sentencing. The defendant further understands that this offense is a Class B felony.

The defendant understands that upon his plea of guilty to Count Thirteen of the indictment charging him with a money laundering conspiracy, the maximum sentence the Court may impose is 20 years imprisonment, a \$500,000.00 fine, and three (3) years of supervised release and a \$100 mandatory special assessment which must be paid in full at the time of sentencing. The defendant further understands that this offense is a Class C felony.

**6. Sentencing Procedures.** The defendant acknowledges, understands and agrees to the following:

a. in determining the appropriate sentence, the Court will consult and consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines promulgated by the United States Sentencing Commission; these Guidelines, however, are advisory in nature, and the Court may impose a sentence either less than or greater than the defendant's applicable Guidelines range, unless the sentence imposed is "unreasonable";

b. the Court will determine the defendant's applicable Sentencing Guidelines range at the time of sentencing;

c. in addition to a sentence of imprisonment, the Court shall impose a term of supervised release of not less than four (4) years;

d. if the defendant violates a condition of supervised release, the Court may revoke the defendant's supervised release and impose an additional period of imprisonment without credit for time previously spent on supervised release. In addition to a new term of imprisonment, the Court also may impose a new period of supervised release;

e. the Court may impose any sentence authorized by law, including a sentence that is outside of, or departs from, the applicable Sentencing Guidelines range;

f. any sentence of imprisonment imposed by the Court will not allow for parole;

g. the Court is not bound by any recommendation regarding the sentence to be imposed or by any calculation or estimation of the Sentencing Guidelines range offered by the parties or the United States Probation Office; and

h. the defendant may not withdraw the guilty plea solely because of the nature or length of the sentence imposed by the Court.

**7. Government's Agreements.** Based upon evidence in its possession at this time, the United States Attorney's Office for the Western District of Missouri, as part of this plea agreement, agrees not to bring any additional charges against defendant for any federal criminal offenses related to this indictment for conspiracy to manufacture and distribute methamphetamine and conspiracy to possess a listed chemical, pseudoephedrine, knowing, or having reasonable cause to believe that it would be used to manufacture a controlled substance for which it has venue and which arose out of the defendant's conduct described above. The Government agrees to dismiss Count Ten at sentencing.

The defendant understands that this plea agreement does not foreclose any prosecution for an act of murder or attempted murder, an act or attempted act of physical or sexual violence against the person of another, or a conspiracy to commit any such acts of violence or any criminal activity of which the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri has no knowledge. The defendant understands this plea agreement will require him to cooperate with the Government in the event his prior statements are needed by the Government for prosecution of others.

The defendant recognizes that the United States' agreement to forego prosecution of all of the criminal offenses with which the defendant might be charged is based solely on the promises made by the defendant in this agreement. If the defendant breaches this plea agreement, the United States retains the right to proceed with the original charges and any other criminal violations established by the evidence. The defendant expressly waives the right to challenge the initiation of the dismissed or additional charges against the defendant if the defendant breaches this agreement. The defendant expressly waives the right to assert a statute of limitations defense

if the dismissed or additional charges are initiated against the defendant following a breach of this agreement. The defendant further understands and agrees that if the Government elects to file additional charges against the defendant following a breach of this plea agreement, the defendant will not be allowed to withdraw the guilty plea.

**8. Preparation of Presentence Report.** The defendant understands the United States will provide to the Court and the United States Probation Office a government version of the offense conduct. This may include information concerning the background, character, and conduct of the defendant, including the entirety of the defendant's criminal activities. The defendant understands these disclosures are not limited to the counts to which the defendant has pleaded guilty. The United States may respond to comments made or positions taken by the defendant or the defendant's counsel or by anyone on defendant's behalf and to correct any misstatements or inaccuracies. The United States further reserves its right to make any recommendations it deems appropriate regarding the disposition of this case, subject only to any limitations set forth in this plea agreement. The United States and the defendant expressly reserve the right to speak to the Court at the time of sentencing pursuant to Rule 32(i)(4) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure.

**9. Withdrawal of Plea.** Either party reserves the right to withdraw from this plea agreement for any or no reason at any time prior to the entry of the defendant's plea of guilty and its formal acceptance by the Court. In the event of such withdrawal, the parties will be restored to their pre-plea agreement positions to the fullest extent possible. However, after the plea has been formally accepted by the Court, the defendant may withdraw the plea of guilty only if the Court rejects the plea agreement or if the defendant can show a fair and just reason for requesting

the withdrawal. The defendant understands that if the Court accepts the plea of guilty and this plea agreement but subsequently imposes a sentence that is outside the defendant's applicable Sentencing Guidelines range, or imposes a sentence that the defendant does not expect, like or agree with, the defendant will not be permitted to withdraw the plea of guilty.

**10. Agreed Guidelines Applications.** With respect to the application of the Sentencing Guidelines to this case, the parties stipulate and agree as follows:

a. The Sentencing Guidelines do not bind the Court and are advisory in nature. The Court may impose a sentence that is either above or below the defendant's applicable Guidelines range, provided the sentence imposed is not "unreasonable";

b. The applicable Guidelines section for the offense of conviction is U.S.S.G. § 2D1.1, which provides for a base offense level of not less than 26, but the parties reserve the right to address at sentencing the pre-sentence report or Court determined drug level;

c. While the parties recognize there might be other specific aggravating or mitigating U.S.S.G. applications applicable to this defendant the parties elect to address those at sentencing whether or not applied by the pre-sentence or Court;

d. The defendant appears to have admitted his guilt and accepted responsibility for his actions, and by timely notifying authorities of the intention to enter a plea of guilty has thereby permitted the Government to avoid preparing for trial and permitted the Government and the Court to allocate their resources efficiently. Therefore, the defendant appears entitled to a three-level reduction pursuant to § 3E1.1(b) of the Sentencing Guidelines and the Government, at the time of sentencing, will make a motion with the Court to that effect unless the defendant (1) fails to abide by all of the terms and conditions of this plea agreement and any pretrial release orders; or (2) attempts to withdraw this guilty plea, violates the law, or otherwise engages in conduct inconsistent with an acceptance of responsibility;

e. There is no agreement between the parties regarding the defendant's criminal history category, including any enhancements that might be applicable due to any criminal history the defendant may have. The parties agree that the Court will determine the applicable criminal history category after receipt of the presentence investigation report prepared by the United States Probation Office;

f. The defendant understands that the estimate of the parties with respect to the Guidelines computation set forth in the subsections of this paragraph does not bind the Court or the United States Probation Office with respect to the appropriate Guidelines levels. Additionally, the failure of the Court to accept these stipulations will not, as outlined in Paragraph 9 of this plea agreement, provide the defendant with a basis to withdraw this plea of guilty;

g. The United States agrees not to seek an upward departure from the Guidelines or a sentence outside the Guidelines range, and defendant agrees to not seek a downward departure from the Guidelines or a sentence outside the Guidelines range. The agreement by the parties to not seek a departure from the Guidelines is not binding upon the Court or the United States Probation Office and the Court may impose any sentence authorized by law, including any sentence outside the applicable Guidelines range that is not “unreasonable”;

h. The defendant consents to judicial fact-finding by a preponderance of the evidence for all issues pertaining to the determination of the defendant’s sentence, specifically including but not limited to: the determination of any mandatory minimum sentence; the facts that support any specific offense characteristic or other enhancement or adjustment, and; any legally authorized increase above the normal statutory maximum. The defendant waives any right to a jury determination beyond a reasonable doubt of all facts used to determine and enhance the sentence imposed, and waives any right to have those facts alleged in the indictment. The defendant also agrees that the Court, in finding the facts relevant to the imposition of sentence, may consider any reliable information, including hearsay; and

i. The defendant understands and agrees that the factual admissions contained in this plea agreement, and any admissions that the defendant may make during any plea colloquy, support the imposition of the agreed-upon Guidelines calculations contained in this agreement.

**11. Effect of Non-Agreement on Guidelines Applications.** The parties understand, acknowledge and agree that there are no agreements between the parties with respect to any Sentencing Guidelines issues other than those specifically listed in Paragraph 10, and its subsections. As to any other Guidelines issues, the parties are free to advocate their respective positions at the sentencing hearing.



**12. Change in Guidelines Prior to Sentencing.** The defendant agrees that if any applicable provision of the Guidelines changes after the execution of this plea agreement, then any request by the defendant to be sentenced pursuant to the new Guidelines will make this plea agreement voidable by the United States at its option. If the Government exercises its option to void the plea agreement, the United States may charge, reinstate, or otherwise pursue any and all criminal charges that could have been brought but for this plea agreement.

**13. Government's Reservation of Rights.** The defendant understands that the United States expressly reserves the right in this case to:

- a. oppose or take issue with any position advanced by defendant or others on the defendant's behalf at the sentencing hearing;
- b. comment on the evidence supporting the charge in the indictment;
- c. oppose any arguments and requests for relief the defendant or others on the defendant's behalf might advance on an appeal from the sentences imposed and that the United States remains free on appeal or collateral proceedings to defend the legality and propriety of the sentence actually imposed, even if the Court chooses not to follow any recommendation made by the United States; and
- d. oppose any post-conviction motions for reduction of sentence, or other relief.

**14. Waiver of Constitutional Rights.** The defendant, by pleading guilty, acknowledges being advised of, understanding, and knowingly and voluntarily waiving the following rights:

- a. the right to plead not guilty and to persist in a plea of not guilty;
- b. the right to be presumed innocent until guilt has been established beyond a reasonable doubt at trial;
- c. the right to a jury trial, and at that trial, the right to the effective assistance of counsel;
- d. the right to confront and cross-examine the witnesses who testify;

e. the right to compel or subpoena witnesses to appear for the defendant;  
and

f. the right to remain silent at trial, and that silence may not be used  
against the defendant.

The defendant understands that by pleading guilty, he waives or gives up those rights and that there will be no trial. The defendant further understands that if he pleads guilty, the Court may ask questions about the offense or offenses to which he pleaded guilty, and if the defendant answers those questions under oath and in the presence of counsel, the answers may later be used against the defendant in a prosecution for perjury or making a false statement. The defendant also understands he has pleaded guilty to a felony offense and, as a result, will lose the right to possess a firearm or ammunition and might be deprived of other rights, such as the right to vote or register to vote, hold public office, or serve on a jury.

**15. Waiver of Appellate and Post-Conviction Rights.**

a. The defendant acknowledges, understands and agrees that by this *unconditional* plea of guilty pursuant to this plea agreement he waives his right to appeal or collaterally attack a finding of guilt following the acceptance of this plea agreement, except on grounds of (1) ineffective assistance of counsel; or (2) prosecutorial misconduct.

b. The defendant expressly waives the right to appeal the sentence, directly or collaterally, on any ground except claims of (1) ineffective assistance of counsel; (2) prosecutorial misconduct; or (3) an illegal sentence. An “illegal sentence” includes a sentence imposed in excess of the statutory maximum, but does *not* include less serious sentencing errors, such as a misapplication of the

Sentencing Guidelines, an abuse of discretion, or the imposition of an unreasonable sentence. However, if the United States exercises its right to appeal the sentence imposed as authorized by 18 U.S.C. § 3742(b), the defendant is released from this waiver and may, as part of the Government's appeal, cross-appeal the sentence as authorized by 18 U.S.C. § 3742(a) with respect to any issues that have not been stipulated to or agreed upon in this agreement.

**16. Financial Obligations.**

By entering into this plea agreement, the defendant represents that he understands and agrees to the following financial obligations:

a. The Court may order restitution to any victims of the offense to which the defendant is pleading guilty. The defendant agrees that the Court may order restitution in connection with the conduct charged in any counts of the indictment which are to be dismissed and all other uncharged related criminal activity.

b. The United States may use the Federal Debt Collection Procedures Act and any other remedies provided by law to enforce any restitution order that may be entered as part of the sentence in this case and to collect any fine or other assessment against the defendant.

c. The defendant will fully and truthfully disclose all assets and property in which he has any interest, or over which the defendant exercises control directly or indirectly, including assets and property held by a spouse, nominee or other third party. The defendant's disclosure obligations are ongoing, and are in force from the execution of this agreement until the defendant has satisfied the restitution order in full.

d. Within 10 days of the execution of this plea agreement, at the request of the USAO, the defendant agrees to execute and submit (1) a Tax Information Authorization form; (2) an Authorization to Release Information; (3) a completed financial disclosure statement; and (4) copies of financial information that the defendant submits to the U.S. Probation Office. The defendant understands that compliance with these requests will be taken into account when the United States makes a recommendation to the Court regarding the defendant's acceptance of responsibility.

e. At the request of the USAO, the defendant agrees to undergo any polygraph examination the United States might choose to administer concerning the identification and recovery of substitute assets and restitution.

f. The defendant hereby authorizes the USAO to obtain a credit report pertaining to the defendant to assist the USAO in evaluating the defendant's ability to satisfy any financial obligations imposed as part of the sentence.

g. The defendant understands that a Special Assessment will be imposed as part of the sentence in this case. The defendant promises to pay the Special Assessment of **\$200.00** by submitting a satisfactory form of payment to the Clerk of the Court prior to appearing for the sentencing proceeding in this case. The defendant agrees to provide the Clerk's receipt as evidence of the fulfillment of this obligation at the time of sentencing.

h. The defendant certifies that he has made no transfer of assets or property for the purpose of (1) evading financial obligations created by this Agreement; (2) evading obligations that may be imposed by the Court; nor (3) hindering efforts of the USAO to enforce such financial obligations. Moreover, the defendant promises that he will make no such transfers in the future.

i. In the event the United States learns of any misrepresentation in the financial disclosure statement, or of any asset in which the defendant had an interest at the time of this plea agreement that is not disclosed in the financial disclosure statement, and in the event such misrepresentation or nondisclosure changes the estimated net worth of the defendant by ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) or more, the United States may at its option: (1) choose to be relieved of its obligations under this plea agreement; or (2) let the plea agreement stand, collect the full forfeiture, restitution, and fines imposed by any criminal or civil judgment, and also collect 100% (one hundred percent) of the value of any previously undisclosed assets. The defendant agrees not to contest any collection of such assets. In the event the United States opts to be relieved of its obligations under this plea agreement, the defendant's previously entered pleas of guilty shall remain in effect and cannot be withdrawn.

**17. Waiver of FOIA Request.** The defendant waives all rights, whether asserted directly or by a representative, to request or receive from any department or agency of the United States any records pertaining to the investigation or prosecution of this case including, without limitation, any records that may be sought under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552, or the Privacy Act of 1974, 5 U.S.C. § 552a.

**18. Waiver of Claim for Attorney's Fees.** The defendant waives all claims under the Hyde Amendment, 18 U.S.C. § 3006A, for attorney's fees and other litigation expenses arising out of the investigation or prosecution of this matter.

**19. Defendant's Agreement to Destruction of Biological Evidence.** In accordance with 18 U.S.C. § 3600A(c)(2), the defendant knowingly and voluntarily waives the right to request DNA testing of any biological evidence which may have been obtained or seized by law enforcement in this case. Defendant agrees that all biological evidence which may have been obtained or seized may be destroyed by law enforcement authorities.

**20. Defendant's Breach of Plea Agreement.** If the defendant commits any crimes, violates any conditions of release, or violates any term of this plea agreement between the signing of this plea agreement and the date of sentencing, or fails to appear for sentencing, or if the defendant provides information to the Probation Office or the Court that is intentionally misleading, incomplete, or untruthful, or otherwise breaches this plea agreement, the United States will be released from its obligations under this agreement. The defendant, however, will remain bound by the terms of the agreement, and will not be allowed to withdraw this plea of guilty.

The defendant also understands and agrees that in the event of a violation of this plea

agreement, all statements made to law enforcement agents subsequent to the execution of this plea agreement, any testimony given before a grand jury or any tribunal or any leads from such statements or testimony shall be admissible against the defendant in any and all criminal proceedings. The defendant waives any rights under the United States Constitution, any statute, Rule 11(f) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, Rule 410 of the Federal Rules of Evidence, or any other federal rule that pertains to the admissibility of any statements made by the defendant subsequent to this plea agreement.

**21. Defendant's Representations.** The defendant acknowledges that defendant has entered into this plea agreement freely and voluntarily after receiving the effective assistance, advice and approval of counsel. The defendant acknowledges satisfaction with the assistance of counsel, and that counsel has fully advised the defendant of all rights and obligations in connection with this plea agreement. The defendant further acknowledges that no threats or promises, other than the promises contained in this plea agreement, have been made by the United States, the Court, the defendant's attorneys or any other party to induce this plea of guilty.

**22. No Undisclosed Terms.** The United States and defendant acknowledge and agree that the above-stated terms and conditions, together with any written supplemental agreement that might be presented to the Court in camera, constitute the entire plea agreement between the parties, and that any other terms and conditions not expressly set forth in this agreement or any written supplemental agreement do not constitute any part of the parties' agreement and will not be enforceable against either party.

**23. Standard of Interpretation.** The parties agree that, unless the constitutional implications inherent in plea agreements require otherwise, this plea agreement should be interpreted according to general contract principles and the words employed are to be given their normal and ordinary meanings. The parties further agree that, in interpreting this agreement, any drafting errors or ambiguities are not to be automatically construed against either party, whether or not that party was involved in drafting or modifying this agreement.

Beth Phillips  
United States Attorney

1/28/10  
Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

*/s/ Bruce Rhoades*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Bruce Rhoades  
Assistant United States Attorney

I have consulted with my attorney and fully understand all of my rights with respect to the offenses charged in the indictment. Further, I have consulted with my attorney and fully understand my rights with respect to the provisions of the Sentencing Guidelines and any statutory minimum sentences. I have read this plea agreement and carefully reviewed every part of it with my attorney. I understand this plea agreement and I voluntarily agree to it.

1/28/10  
Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

*/s/ Ernest Harold Sneddon*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ernest Harold Sneddon  
Defendant

I am defendant Ernest Harold Sneddon's attorney. I have fully explained his rights with respect to the offenses charged in the indictment. Further, I have reviewed with the defendant the provisions of the Sentencing Guidelines and statutory minimum sentences which might apply in this case. I have carefully reviewed every part of this plea agreement with the defendant. To my knowledge, Ernest Harold Sneddon's decision to enter into this plea agreement is an informed and voluntary one.

1/28/10  
Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

*/s/ John G. Gromowsky*

\_\_\_\_\_  
John G. Gromowsky  
Attorney for Defendant