The last of eleven defendants charged in one of the state's largest indoor marijuana grow operations pled guilty this week in United States District Court before Chief Judge Thomas B. Russell to manufacturing and distributing a controlled substance, money laundering and possession of firearms by a convicted felon, announced David J. Hale, United States Attorney for the Western District of Kentucky.

According to information presented in court, Dallas Norris, age 70, of Barren County, Kentucky, and ten co-defendants operated a sophisticated indoor marijuana grow operation, considered by Kentucky State Police to be one of the largest of its kind discovered in the Western District of Kentucky. An initial tip to KSP led troopers to Norris's Glasgow, Kentucky home, where they discovered 1,267 marijuana plants on November 12, 2011.

The investigation by KSP, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Warren County Drug Task Force revealed that the marijuana grow became operational in 2008 and had been producing seven to ten pounds of marijuana approximately every two weeks. Court records allege that Norris was selling the marijuana for $2,500 to $3,000 per pound and that he had taken elaborate measures to avoid detection of his operation including: illegally tapping the local power company main line to power the grow; and pumping and purifying cave water located on the property to water the extensive grow operation.

According to the plea agreement, between February 1, 2011 and November 12, 2011, Norris was the leader of the conspiracy involving ten indicted co-defendants and others to manufacture over 1,000 marijuana plants at premises maintained by Norris for the purpose of manufacturing, storing, and distributing marijuana. Between February 28, 2008 and March 12, 2008, Norris structured three transactions with financial institutions by purchasing three cashier's checks each in the amount of $9,000. Norris used the cashier's checks and an additional personal payment of $6,114 to purchase a 2006 Ford truck. Norris admitted to structuring these transactions to evade bank reporting requirements. At the time of his arrest, Norris, a convicted felon, based upon his previous conviction for manufacturing marijuana, was in possession of two firearms.

The ten co-defendants, charged in a May 16, 2012 federal superseding indictment, have pled guilty for their roles in the conspiracy and await sentencing none of which are from this area.

At sentencing, Norris faces a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years in prison, supervised release of five years, and a fine of $21,500,000. Norris will forfeit to the United States, a 2006 Ford F-250 truck, property located in Barren County, Kentucky and Jackson County, Ohio, $22,621 US currency, and miscellaneous farm equipment and collectibles.

All defendants are scheduled for sentencing on March 5, 2013, before Senior Judge Russell in U.S. District Court, Bowling Green, Kentucky.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Mac Shannon and was investigated by KSP, ATF and the Warren County Drug Task Force.