

THE PAMPWA NEWS

Wednesday, January 19, 2005

Sordid tale unfolds in affidavits *Roach pleads innocent to federal charges*

By **DAVID BOWSER**
Staff Writer

Pampa's district attorney remained in Randall County jail today, awaiting transfer to a substance abuse rehabilitation facility.

Richard James "Rick" Roach, 55, was arrested by FBI agents on federal drug charges shortly before 9 a.m., Tuesday, Jan. 11, as he entered the 223rd District Courtroom in the Gray County Court House for docket call.

A week later, U.S. Magistrate Clinton E. Averitte ordered Roach to a substance abuse rehabilitation facility in Amarillo. If he is released from the facility, Averitte ordered Roach to stay in Potter County.

He pleaded innocent Tuesday to federal drug and firearms charges, and his attorney agreed to place him in an inpatient drug rehabilitation program indefinitely.

If convicted on all counts, Roach faces up to 51 years in prison and \$2.5 million in fines. He declined to comment while being led from court Tuesday.

"We're looking forward to trying to get this entire situation resolved as quickly as possible," Roach's attorney, Bill Kelly, told the Associated Press after the hearing.

Investigative documents pertaining to the search warrants served by FBI, DEA and ATF agents the day of Roach's arrest a week ago were unsealed during the detention hear-

ing Tuesday afternoon in Amarillo.

They indicate that Roach was under investigation for more than a year by federal authorities.

Court documents indicate that searches were made of the 31st District Attorney's office in Gray County Court House, Roach's home at 133 Walnut Drive and Apt. 504 of the Caprock Apartments, an apartment which Special Agent John Whitworth of the FBI's Amarillo office said the DA's office rents.

Whitworth said the apartment was originally rented for an investigator, but he said in his statement that Roach occasionally uses it.

Initially, according to affidavits by Whitworth, Roach was suspected of embezzling funds from money seizures made by area law enforcement officers. As the investigation proceeded, Whitworth said, witnesses claimed Roach was involved in drug use.

Whitworth's affidavits indicate the resulting investigation revolved around federal laws concerning possession of child pornography; possession of a firearm while an unlawful user or addict to any controlled substance, narcotics conspiracy and possession of a controlled substance.

According to several of Whitworth's affidavits, on Dec. 16, 2004, one of Roach's employees found a syringe floating in the toilet in their office bathroom. Whitworth



Pampa News photo by **DAVID BOWSER**

Rick Roach, 31st District Attorney, smiles as he leaves the federal courthouse in Amarillo Tuesday following arraignment on federal drug charges.



Pampa News photo by DAVID BOWSER

Surrounded by Randall County deputies, Rick Roach, 31st District Attorney in the Texas Panhandle, gets in a sheriff's van to return to jail from after being arraigned on federal drug and firearms charges in U.S. District Court in Amarillo Tuesday. He pleaded innocent to all charges at the proceedings.

Roach

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said only Roach and three employees have access to the bathroom.

The syringe was sent to a DEA lab in Dallas, Whitworth said, where it was found to contain methamphetamine residue.

Whitworth said that Roach was observed on Dec. 20, 2004, injecting himself with what Roach claimed was methamphetamine at the Caprock Apartments. On Dec. 31, 2004, Whitworth said Roach was observed injecting himself with what Roach claimed was methamphetamine in his office at the courthouse.

On Jan. 5, 2005, a confidential witness, Whitworth said, reported seeing Roach inject himself with what Roach identified as methamphetamine. Roach told the witness, according to the affidavit, it was in order to enhance his sexual experience.

"Witnesses believe Roach has been regularly using methamphetamine for several months, based on obvious and prolonged signs he has exhibited," Whitworth included in his affidavit, "including extreme mood swings, an inability to sit still, incoherent statements, unexplained absences from work, substantial weight

loss, pale complexion, irrational behavior and extreme paranoia."

Other affidavits accuse Roach of offering Rolex watches and money to Texas Department of Safety troopers to allegedly motivate them to make more money seizures. The two troopers whom Roach reportedly approached told Whitworth they told the district attorney that what he was suggesting was illegal and they wanted no part of it.

Whitworth said that Roach's action led several Texas Department of Public Safety officials to believe that Roach might be using seized funds for his personal use.

"He does not prosecute cases for his office," Whitworth said of Roach in his affidavit, "He spends all his time dealing with seized money and vehicles. Roach constantly pesters DPS about making more money seizures."

Law enforcement officers generally believe that drugs travel eastbound on Interstate 40, while money from the drug sales travels west.

Noting this, Whitworth said that Roach asked one DPS lieutenant to order his

troopers to start focusing on the westbound I-40 traffic.

"According to multiple witnesses," Whitworth said, "Roach often dismisses the criminal charges against defendants if they agree not to contest their money seizures."

Roach, Whitworth said, is very secretive about seized money and the accounts into which they are deposited.

According to Treasury Department reports, Roach

personally made 25 cash deposits totaling over \$3 million between Feb. 23, 2001, and Oct. 20, 2003, into accounts controlled by his

office. The Treasury Department reports show two different dates of birth and two different driver's license numbers for Roach.

Whitworth said that last fall, Roach personally checked out two pounds of methamphetamine from the DPS lab in Amarillo, presenting a court order and saying it was to be used for K9 training. The FBI agent said that K9 handlers use amounts smaller than one kilo to train their dogs.

As of Jan. 4, Whitworth

said DPS officials reported that none of the two pounds of meth had been returned.

Whitworth said that when Roach moved to Miami from Breckenridge, he had allegedly checked into a drug rehabilitation center for cocaine addiction.

Whitworth also said in his affidavits that a witness told him Roach watches internet pornography on his computer in the office. The witness, according to the affidavit, estimated the girl on Roach's computer screen to be 15 or 16 years old.

"Roach has made sexual comments about girls as young as 12," Whitworth said. "Roach has expressed his desire to produce his own pornography."

Federal agents this week said the case remains open and the investigation is continuing.

'Roach has made sexual comments about girls as young as 12.'

— John Whitworth
FBI Special Agent
in affidavit