

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**

**DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA**

**SOUTHERN DIVISION**

<p>UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,  Plaintiff,  vs.  REX LEON BURTIS,  Defendant.</p>	<p>4:19-CR-40023-03-KES  <b>FINAL INSTRUCTIONS TO THE JURY</b></p>
---	--

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

FINAL INSTRUCTIONS

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 1 – INTRODUCTION ..... 1  
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 2 – CONSPIRACY TO DISTRIBUTE A CONTROLLED  
SUBSTANCE..... 2  
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 3 – QUANTITY OF METHAMPHETAMINE ..... 6  
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 4 – CONVERSION CHART..... 7  
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 5 – CO-CONSPIRATOR ACTS AND STATEMENTS ... 8  
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 6 – IMPEACHMENT ..... 9  
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 7 – PRESUMPTION OF INNOCENCE AND BURDEN  
OF PROOF ..... 12  
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 8 – REASONABLE DOUBT ..... 13  
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 9 – DUTY TO DELIBERATE ..... 14  
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 10 – DUTY DURING DELIBERATIONS ..... 15

VERDICT FORM

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 1 – INTRODUCTION

Members of the jury, the written instructions I gave you at the beginning of the trial and the oral instructions I gave you during the trial remain in effect. I now give you some additional instructions.

The instructions I am about to give you, as well as the preliminary instructions given to you at the beginning of the trial, are in writing and will be available to you in the jury room. *All* instructions, whenever given and whether in writing or not, must be followed. This is true even though some of the instructions I gave you at the beginning of the trial are not repeated here.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 2 – CONSPIRACY TO DISTRIBUTE A CONTROLLED  
SUBSTANCE

For you to find Rex Leon Burtis guilty of the offense of conspiracy to distribute a controlled substance as charged in the Third Superseding Indictment, the prosecution must prove the following four essential elements beyond a reasonable doubt:

**One, beginning on an unknown date and continuing until on or about January 7, 2020, two or more persons reached an agreement or came to an understanding to distribute a mixture or substance containing methamphetamine;**

Methamphetamine is a Schedule II controlled substance.

A conspiracy is an agreement of two or more persons to commit one or more crimes. It makes no difference whether any co-conspirators are defendants or named in the Third Superseding Indictment. For this element to be proved,

- Burtis may have been, but did not have to be, one of the original conspirators
- The crime that the conspirators agreed to commit did not actually have to be committed
- The agreement did not have to be written or formal
- The agreement did not have to involve every detail of the conspiracy
- The conspirators did not have to personally benefit from the conspiracy

Here, the conspirators allegedly agreed to commit the crime of distribution of a mixture or substance containing methamphetamine. The elements of distribution of a mixture or substance containing methamphetamine are the following:

- *One*, that a person intentionally transferred a mixture or substance containing methamphetamine to another;
- *And two*, that at the time of the transfer, the person knew that what he was transferring was a controlled substance.

It is not necessary for the government to prove that Burtis knew the precise nature of the controlled substance that is the subject of the charge. The Government must prove beyond a reasonable doubt, however, that Burtis did know that some type of controlled substance was the subject of the agreement to distribute.

Remember that the prosecution does not have to prove that distribution of a mixture or substance containing methamphetamine actually occurred for this element of the "conspiracy" offense to be proved.

**Two, that Burtis voluntarily and intentionally joined in the agreement or understanding, either at the time it was first reached or at some later time while it was still in effect;**

Burtis must have joined in the agreement, but he may have done so at any time during its existence. Burtis may have joined the agreement even if he agreed to play only a minor role in it.

Burtis did not have to do any of the following to join the agreement:

- join the agreement at the same time as all the other conspirators
- know all of the details of the conspiracy, such as the names, identities, or locations of all the other members, or
- conspire with every other member of the conspiracy

On the other hand, each of the following, alone, is not enough to show that Burtis joined the agreement:

- evidence that a person was merely present at the scene of an event
- evidence that a person merely acted in the same way as others
- evidence that a person merely associated with others
- evidence that a person was friends with or met socially with individuals involved in the conspiracy

- evidence that a person who had no knowledge of a conspiracy happened to act in a way that advanced an objective of the conspiracy
- evidence that a person merely knew of the existence of a conspiracy
- evidence that a person merely knew that an objective of the conspiracy was being considered or attempted, or
- evidence that a person merely approved of the objectives of the conspiracy

Rather, the prosecution must prove that Burtis had some degree of knowing involvement in the agreement.

In deciding whether an alleged conspiracy existed, you may consider the acts and statements of each person alleged to be part of the agreement. In deciding whether Burtis joined the agreement, you may consider only the acts and statements of Burtis.

***Three, that at the time Burtis joined in the agreement or understanding, he knew the purpose of the agreement or understanding;***

A person knows the purpose of the agreement if he is aware of the agreement and does not participate in it through ignorance, mistake, carelessness, negligence, or accident. It is seldom, if ever, possible to determine directly what was in the defendant's mind. Thus, the defendant's knowledge of the agreement and its purpose can be proved like anything else, from reasonable conclusions drawn from the evidence.

It is not enough that the defendant and other alleged participants in the agreement to commit the crime of distribution of methamphetamine simply met, discussed matters of common interest, acted in similar ways, or perhaps helped one another. The defendant must have known of the existence and purpose of the agreement. Without such knowledge, the defendant cannot be guilty of conspiracy, even if his acts furthered the conspiracy.

***And four, that the agreement or understanding involved 500 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing a detectable amount of methamphetamine.***

For you to find Burtis guilty of the offense charged in the Third Superseding Indictment, the prosecution must prove all four of the essential elements beyond a reasonable doubt. Otherwise, you must find Burtis not guilty of the offense charged in the Third Superseding Indictment.

If you do not unanimously find all four elements beyond a reasonable doubt, but you do find the first three elements unanimously and beyond a reasonable doubt, you must go on to consider whether the defendant conspired to distribute some lesser amount of methamphetamine. If you find the defendant conspired to distribute an amount of methamphetamine less than 500 grams but more than 50 grams, then you must find the defendant guilty of the crime of conspiracy to distribute 50 grams or more of a mixture or substance containing methamphetamine. If you unanimously find that the defendant conspired to distribute an amount of methamphetamine less than 50 grams beyond a reasonable doubt, you must find the defendant guilty of the crime of conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine. Otherwise, you must find the defendant not guilty.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 3 – QUANTITY OF METHAMPHETAMINE

If you determine a conspiracy existed and Rex Leon Burtis joined the conspiracy, you must then determine beyond a reasonable doubt the quantity of methamphetamine for which Burtis is responsible, if any. If you find Burtis guilty of conspiracy to distribute a mixture or substance containing methamphetamine, he is responsible for:

- Any methamphetamine he possessed for personal use, distributed or agreed to distribute during the course of the conspiracy; and
- Any methamphetamine fellow conspirators distributed or agreed to distribute, if you find those distributions or agreements to distribute were a necessary or natural consequence of the agreement or understanding and were reasonably foreseeable by Burtis during the course of the conspiracy.

Do not double count any quantities of methamphetamine if more than one co-conspirator was involved in conspiring to distribute that particular quantity of the methamphetamine. Instead, you must determine the amount of methamphetamine involved in the conspiracy for which Burtis can be held responsible, if any.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 4 – CONVERSION CHART

The following conversion chart may be helpful:

OUNCES/POUNDS	GRAMS/KILOGRAMS
1 ounce	28.35 grams / 0.028 kilogram
1 pound	453.59 grams / 0.4536 kilogram
2.2 pounds	1,000 grams / 1 kilogram



FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 5 – CO-CONSPIRATOR ACTS AND STATEMENTS

If you determined that an agreement existed and that Rex Leon Burtis joined the agreement, then acts and statements knowingly done or made by a member of the agreement during the existence of the agreement and in furtherance of it, may be considered by you as evidence pertaining to Burtis, even though the acts and statements were done or made in the absence of and without the knowledge of Burtis. This includes acts done or statements made before Burtis joined the agreement, because a person who knowingly, voluntarily and intentionally joins an existing conspiracy becomes responsible for all of the conduct of the co-conspirators from the beginning of the conspiracy.

Acts and statements which are made before the conspiracy began or after it ended are admissible only against the person making them.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 6 – IMPEACHMENT

In Preliminary Instruction No. 6, I instructed you generally on the credibility of witnesses. I now give you this further instruction on how the credibility of a witness can be “impeached” and how you may treat certain evidence.

A witness may be discredited or impeached by contradictory evidence; by a showing that the witness testified falsely concerning a material matter; or by evidence that at some other time the witness has said or done something, or has failed to say or do something, that is inconsistent with the witness’s present testimony. If earlier statements of a witness were admitted into evidence, they were not admitted to prove that the contents of those statements were true. Instead, you may consider those earlier statements only to determine whether you think they are consistent or inconsistent with the trial testimony of the witness, and therefore whether they affect the credibility of that witness.

You have heard that Christopher Vonwille, Jaqueline Muhs, and Alex Lang were once convicted of a crime or crimes. You may use that evidence only to help you decide whether to believe the witness and how much weight to give their testimony.

You have heard testimony from Christopher Vonwille, Jaqueline Muhs, and Alex Lang who stated that they participated in the crime charged against the defendant. Their testimony was received in evidence and may be considered by you. You may give their testimony such weight as you think it deserves. Whether or not their testimony may have been influenced by their desire to please the prosecution or to strike a good bargain with the prosecution about their own situation is for you to determine.

You have heard evidence that Christopher Vonwille, Jaqueline Muhs, and Alex Lang have each made a plea agreement with the prosecution. Their testimony was received in evidence and may be considered by you. You may give their testimony such weight as you think it deserves. Whether or not their

testimony may have been influenced by the plea agreement or by the prosecution's promise is for you to determine. The witnesses' guilty pleas cannot be considered by you as any evidence of Burtis's guilt. The witnesses' guilty pleas can be considered by you only for the purpose of determining how much, if at all, to rely upon the witnesses' testimony.

You have heard evidence that Christopher Vonwille, Jaqueline Muhs, and Alex Lang each hope to receive a reduced sentence on criminal charges pending against them in return for their cooperation with the prosecution in this case. Vonwille, Muhs, and Lang each entered into an agreement with the government which provides that in return for their assistance or testimony, the prosecution will recommend a less severe sentence which could be less than the mandatory minimum sentence for the crime with which they are charged. Vonwille, Muhs, and Lang are each subject to a mandatory minimum sentence, that is, a sentence that the law provides must be of a certain minimum length. If the prosecutor handling these witnesses' case believes they provided substantial assistance, that prosecutor can file in the court in which the charges are pending against this witness a motion to reduce their sentence below the statutory minimum. The judge has no power to reduce a sentence for substantial assistance unless the government, acting through the United States Attorney, files a such a motion. If such a motion for reduction of sentence for substantial assistance is filed by the government then it is up to the judge to decide whether to reduce the sentence at all, and if so, how much to reduce it. You may give the testimony of each of these witnesses such weight as you think it deserves. Whether or not testimony of a witness may have been influenced by his or her hope of receiving a reduced sentence is for you to decide.

If you believe that a witness has been discredited or impeached, it is your exclusive right to give that witness's testimony whatever weight, if any, you think it deserves.

Your decision on the facts of this case should not be determined by the number of witnesses testifying for or against a party. You should consider all

the facts and circumstances in evidence to determine which of the witnesses you choose to believe or not believe. You may find that the testimony of a smaller number of witnesses on one side is more credible than the testimony of a greater number of witnesses on the other side.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 7 – PRESUMPTION OF INNOCENCE AND BURDEN  
OF PROOF

The presumption of innocence means that the defendant is presumed to be absolutely not guilty.

- This presumption means that you must put aside all suspicion that might arise from the defendant's arrest, the charge, or the fact that he is here in court.
- This presumption remains with the defendant throughout the trial.
- This presumption is enough, alone, for you to find the defendant not guilty, unless the prosecution proves, beyond a reasonable doubt, all of the elements of an offense charged against him.

The burden is always on the prosecution to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

- This burden never, ever shifts to the defendant to prove his innocence.
- This burden means that the defendant does not have to call any witnesses, produce any evidence, cross-examine the prosecution's witnesses, or testify.

This burden means that you must find the defendant not guilty of an offense charged against him, unless the prosecution proves beyond a reasonable doubt that he has committed each and every element of that offense.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 8 – REASONABLE DOUBT

A reasonable doubt is a doubt based upon reason and common sense.

- A reasonable doubt may arise from evidence produced by the prosecution or the defendant, keeping in mind that the defendant never, ever has the burden or duty to call any witnesses or to produce any evidence.
- A reasonable doubt may arise from the prosecution's lack of evidence.

The prosecution must prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

- Proof beyond a reasonable doubt requires careful and impartial consideration of all the evidence in the case before making a decision.
- Proof beyond a reasonable doubt is proof so convincing that you would be willing to rely and act on it in the most important of your own affairs.
- This burden means that, if the defendant does not testify, you must not consider that fact in any way, or even discuss it, in arriving at your verdict.

The prosecution's burden is heavy, but it does not require proof beyond all possible doubt.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 9 – DUTY TO DELIBERATE

A verdict must represent the careful and impartial judgment of each of you. Before you make that judgment, you must consult with one another and try to reach agreement if you can do so consistent with your individual judgment.

- If you are convinced that the prosecution has not proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty, say so.
- If you are convinced that the prosecution has proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty, say so.
- Do not give up your honest beliefs just because others think differently or because you simply want to be finished with the case.
- On the other hand, do not hesitate to re-examine your own views and to change your opinion if you are convinced that it is wrong.
- You can only reach a unanimous verdict if you discuss your views openly and frankly, with proper regard for the opinions of others, and with a willingness to re-examine your own views.
- Remember that you are not advocates, but judges of the facts, so your sole interest is to seek the truth from the evidence.
- The question is never who wins or loses the case, because society always wins, whatever your verdict, when you return a just verdict based solely on the evidence, reason, your common sense, and these Instructions.
- You must consider all of the evidence bearing on each element before you.
- Take all the time that you feel is necessary.

Remember that this case is important to the parties and to the fair administration of justice, so do not be in a hurry to reach a verdict just to be finished with the case.

## FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 10 – DUTY DURING DELIBERATIONS

You must follow certain rules while conducting your deliberations and returning your verdict:

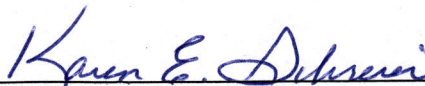
- Select a foreperson to preside over your discussions and to speak for you here in court.
- Do not consider punishment in any way in deciding whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty. If the defendant is guilty, I will decide what the sentence should be.
- Communicate with me by sending me a note through a Court Security Officer (CSO). The note must be signed by one or more of you. Remember that you should not tell anyone, including me, how your votes stand. I will respond as soon as possible, either in writing or orally in open court.
- Base your verdict solely on the evidence, reason, your common sense, and these Instructions. Again, nothing I have said or done was intended to suggest what your verdict should be—that is entirely for you to decide.
- Reach your verdict without discrimination. In reaching your verdict, you must not consider the defendant's race, color, religious beliefs, national origin, or sex. You are not to return a verdict for or against the defendant unless you would return the same verdict without regard to his race, color, religious beliefs, national origin, or sex.
- Complete the Verdict Form. The foreperson must bring the signed verdict form to the courtroom when it is time to announce your verdict.
- When you have reached a verdict, the foreperson will advise the CSO that you are ready to return to the courtroom.



Good luck with your deliberations.

Dated July 29, 2020.

BY THE COURT:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
KAREN E. SCHREIER  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE