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BULLY PULPIT

Indiana Pastor Turned Flock Into Drug Runners

A small-town holy man by day was running a massive synthetic marijuana ring at night using his unwitting congregants.



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“They were good people,” Jaynes pleaded that morning in October 2013, swearing churchgoers knew not what they did. The teary-eyed pastor said they had no idea his synthetic drug warehouse operation, masquerading as a “potpourri” business, was illegal. (Some churchgoers, according to court

documents, knew the potpourri was smokeable but did not ask questions about it.)

Jaynes asked what federal agents wanted and offered to come clean if they vowed not to indict others at Irvington Bible Baptist Church, a cream-colored cubbyhole of a sanctuary that he'd founded 15 years before. The parish is down the road from the business park, where Jaynes owned warehouses and weeks before, investigators had seized a stockpile of packets labeled "Pirates Booty," or "Strawberry Passion Pyara," suggestive of synthetic marijuana.

Jaynes tried to claim the operation was legal before declaring he'd go to prison but didn't want to see anyone else go down. He vowed to "do everything in the world" to scrub "spice," or [synthetic](#) cannabinoids, from the Hoosier State.

But the detective informed Jaynes that immunity for his followers wasn't guaranteed, the [Indianapolis Star](#) reported in a 2015 investigation into Jaynes's *Breaking Bad*-style fall from grace.

Last week, the 45-year-old pulpiteer pleaded guilty to producing 100 tons of the fake pot, also called "K2," and to conspiracy to commit fraud through mislabeling the controlled substances, according to the [Indy Star](#).

Under a plea deal filed in St Louis federal court, Jaynes will serve no more than 12½ years in prison. He agreed to forfeit at least \$41,700, along with 800 pounds of "silver-colored coins and pieces" and 27 pounds of silver-colored bars, court papers state.

Jaynes's \$2.6 million spice ring involved an unlikely cast of characters: his brother-in-law and fellow church leader Kirk Parsons; an Indianapolis public school teacher who struck a [deal](#) with prosecutors; and a pair of married sheriff's deputies who worked out with the pastor on his drug lab property. Only one of

the deputies is facing felony charges, court records show. Another suspect, whose attorney requested a psychiatric exam, committed suicide in jail.

Both Jaynes and Parsons—whose plea deal is sealed and who faced the same drug trafficking and conspiracy charges as Jaynes—face sentencing in July.

Also implicated is Doug Sloan, a former traveling clown and Libertarian state senate candidate who once allegedly visited a strip club with [Russell Taylor](#), the director of Jared Fogle's youth charity who is serving 27 years behind bars on child porn charges, the *Indy Star* revealed.

Sloan told investigators that Pastor Jaynes, along with deputies Teresa and Jason Woods, had known Taylor for years. Sloan met the convicted kiddie pornographer at a concert put on by Jaynes's band, [Tight Thirty](#), in 2012, one Hancock County affidavit reviewed by The Daily Beast shows. The pervy Taylor smoked spice with the cops "on numerous occasions while socializing," Sloan told investigators.

The preacher called the detective to the McDonald's and requested forgiveness for his flock.

It was the first time Robert Jaynes, an Indianapolis orator of fire and brimstone, and a 40-something dad who sidelined as a rock vocalist and local drug kingpin, had buzzed police since they raided his inventory.

Now Woods is facing six felonies in Hancock County for allegedly using his shield to provide security to the drug conspiracy, which stretched from China to Indiana to California, in return for gift trips to Vegas, the *Indy Star* [reported](#).

"All of us were like, 'This is the weirdest cast of characters we've seen,'" Brent Eaton, Hancock County's prosecutor, told The Daily Beast. "You've got the preacher, the guy who's running [Fogle's] foundation, the sheriff's deputies,

people from the church. You've got shipping from around the world to show where the product came from."

"It's very unusual," Eaton added. "The [drug] trade doesn't just exist in dark alleys or late at night in tough neighborhoods. This is something ... that can really find its way into all parts and aspects of our society. It's sobering."

The morning of Jaynes's secret confession in the shelter of the Golden Arches, he told the detective he would "tell his entire story from beginning to end," if the "others" were spared. Yet questions linger as to why the seemingly straight-arrow sermonizer of eternal damnation became central Indiana's own [Walter White](#).

The Beginning

At a tent revival in summer of 2013, Jaynes knelt and prayed before kicking off a [tirade](#) against modern America's evils. "People don't have character like they used to have," the Baptist thundered. "Not a lot of Jesus around anymore The whole country's dark. Our families are dark. There's something wrong with our families."

Luke Austin Daugherty, who once knew Jaynes and Parsons in church circles 15 years before, posted [footage](#) from the worship rally online and in a blog [post](#), he did his own digging into the men's spice underworld.

Daugherty told The Daily Beast he believed Jaynes's true colors were transparent to anyone not blinded by his ministerial authority.

"He was a very touchy-feely minister, particularly with women. Or as my wife would call him, 'creepy.' Though he feigned genuine care toward his flock and visitors, his projected affect had the thinness of the aroma of a cheap aftershave," Daugherty said.

“Though some of his still-devoted followers may challenge my assertion and insist that Jaynes really did care for his flock, the fact that he coerced a portion of them into a felonious drug ring testifies to the contrary,” he added.

Indeed, unbeknownst to some devotees, Jayne was running a multimillion-dollar drug operation, and the Department of Homeland Security, along with Indiana State Police, were on his trail after intercepting packages addressed to him from China.



One churchgoer and hired hand later told police Jaynes spent \$1.19 million in eight months for “product supplies” to make his illicit drugs. Another congregant said Jaynes routinely treated his flock to “a big fancy dinner,” court papers state.

It was a far cry from Jaynes’s beginnings as an aspiring preacher under the mentorship of Baptist minister Earl Chestnut in the 1990s. Chestnut, who worked

with Jaynes at a Mooresville church, is Russell Taylor's stepfather, the *Indy Star* reported.

Bizarrely enough, Chestnut appears to list himself as an "operation manager" for one of Jaynes's business enterprises, Tight Thirty, on his LinkedIn page. He misspells it, however, as "Thite Thirty Inc." (Chestnut has not been charged in relation to Jaynes's case.) Tight Thirty Entertainment was a business registered to Jaynes, in a warehouse next door to his West Strong Wholesale, where spice was stored and packaged, the *Indy Star* reported.

In 1998, Jaynes left Mooresville to open Irvington Bible Baptist Church, and his future spice dealer, Parsons, came with him, the *Indy Star* reported.

As The Daily Beast reported [last year](#), spice's dangerous highs can be fatal, sending people "surfing" atop New York City subways and plunging to their deaths in the Hudson River.

Across the country, drivers are [blacking out](#) after using the drug, or roving like the Walking Dead in public parks. Cops in [Clearwater](#), Florida, have been routinely called to a park taken over by spice users slumped over and hardly able to move or speak.

Spice is made by spraying man-made chemicals, often imported by overseas manufacturers, onto a mixture of herbs. The synthetic cannabinoids mimic the psychoactive ingredients of marijuana but can trigger a much more potent high, bringing hallucination and psychosis, authorities say.

As lawmakers and the Drug Enforcement Administration crack down on spice, some dealers have [altered](#) their recipes to skirt bans on specific compounds.

Jaynes entered the spice business sometime around 2010, when spice was legal and largely outside police and lawmaker radar, according to the *Star*. He tried to

circumvent the law by selling the drug as “incense” and “potpourri” and sticking labels on his products that said “not for human consumption,” court records show.

Jaynes’s attorney did not return messages left by The Daily Beast.

According to Jaynes’s plea agreement, the pastor purchased and distributed spice from Doug Sloan, the former traveling clown, and Sloan’s brother, Greg, before striking out on his own. The Sloan brothers are charged with trafficking spice but haven’t been sentenced yet, court records show.

In 2012, several federal agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Administration, were zeroing in on the Sloan brothers. Jaynes was next in their crosshairs.

Authorities eventually pinpointed the fiery preacher after U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents inspected parcels from China, packed with illegal cannabinoids—addressed to Jaynes, but listing the address of Parsons, his brother-in-law and alleged right-hand man.

In October 2013, federal and state investigators descended on a warehouse housing West Strong Wholesale, one of Jaynes’s businesses, and discovered a U-Haul with “packets of synthetic drugs in plain view,” court papers claim.

Through loading dock doors, the cops could see acetone buckets, which emitted a strong odor, and boxes filled with wrappers, drying racks and fans—items authorities say are consistent with synthetic lab materials.

Four workers loaded the trucks that day, and a hired hand told investigators Parsons offered him \$1,000 a week to pack the drugs into packets. Others filled as many as 10,000 spice packets for \$100 a day. Parsons or Jaynes would deliver

50-pound drug bags for repackaging into 2- to 5-gram packets, according to a probable cause affidavit.

Meanwhile, other church members told investigators Jaynes instructed them to purchase cashier's checks with money he gave them. He warned never to purchase a check above \$10,000 to avoid federal reporting requirements, court papers allege.

The pastor would also instruct his flock to write checks from personal bank accounts to Reliable Distributing, a Canadian firm known to authorities as a broker of raw synthetic drug powders from Chinese manufacturers, court papers charge.

Jaynes was so paranoid of "competitors" that he demanded Deputy Woods come to his warehouse office and "scan [it] for bugs," a bookkeeper for Jaynes's companies, Tight Thirty Entertainment and West Strong Wholesale, told investigators. According to court documents, Woods was looking for recording devices. While he wasn't charged in Jaynes's federal case, Woods awaits six county felony charges related to spice trafficking.

Prosecutors say Jaynes even gave one congregant \$230,000 in cash to buy a farm in New Palestine, Indiana, so the preacher could set up a designer drug lab on the property, authorities claim.

Agents raided the New Palestine residence and seized thousands of empty drug packets, along with 1,305 pounds of finished synthetic drugs. Then they turned to neighbors for intel. Two residents reported seeing a sheriff's department vehicle in the driveway so often they assumed a police officer owned the property.

Months later, a tip about a possible "dirty" cop would lead investigators to a pair of husband-and-wife Hendricks County deputies. Authorities believed the cops were doing Pastor Jaynes's bidding.

Private Eyes

Deputy Jason Woods had a \$250,000 hole burning in his pocket as he waited in a McDonald's parking lot, on the lookout for a mystery man in a black Chrysler.

According to an [Indy Star](#) investigation, Woods gripped two plastic bags stuffed with bills belonging to Doug Sloan, the onetime clown turned mortgage broker, who had asked him to deliver the cash to business associate and [now convicted](#) spice dealer, 67-year-old Roger Upchurch.

Woods had been holding Sloan's drug money for months in a basement safe as a favor; Sloan needed the cop to keep the cash as he prepared to move to Costa Rica, court papers allege. Sloan "felt comfortable" giving Woods his money, later telling investigators he believed no one would dare break into a police officer's home.

But in October 2013, Woods wanted Sloan to take his riches back. The feds had just raided Jaynes's spice operation, and perhaps Woods suspected his association with the pastor would bring cops to his door. Because Sloan was in Florida, he requested that Upchurch manage the money transfer and arranged the Mickey D's rendezvous.

There was even a password for the handoff. According to court papers, Sloan instructed Woods to tell Upchurch, "The pearl is in the river."

Still, things didn't go as planned. That evening, Sloan received a text from Upchurch, who claimed he waited half an hour but never saw Woods or the money. Yet Woods contended he handed the money to a man in his 30s with facial hair and a [baseball cap](#), according to court papers.

After Sloan informed Woods that Upchurch didn't get the money, Woods was "crying and wiggling out," Teresa Woods told investigators, according to court documents. Court records indicate Sloan never recovered his missing money.

That evening, according to the *Indy Star*, Sloan received a threatening text message. "We took your money because you're a [expletive] idiot and your mouth is getting people in trouble," the missive warned. "So keep it [expletive] shut or we'll come after more than that. Remember, we can hear everything you say."

Sloan didn't alert police. Instead, he hired a private eye, Virgil Vandagriff, to track the stolen funds. According to records published by the *Indy Star*, the PI wrote a letter to Sloan indicating Woods refused a polygraph test and never revealed he was a cop. Rather, Woods told the sleuth—a retired Marion County detective—that he worked as a photographer.

Woods's boss was eventually tipped off about a possible "dirty" deputy in his ranks, based off Vandagriff's suspicions.

In a memo published by the *Indy Star*, Hendricks County Sheriff Dave Galloway said he received a call from Marion County's sheriff, who said Woods was a suspect in stealing \$250,000 from a Vandagriff client. The disclosure led to the sheriff firing the married deputies, and later to new felony charges against Jason Woods.

Strangely enough, relatives of Jason Woods also tried outing him to cops. Teresa Woods's brother contacted the feds in May 2014, saying he'd discovered a pile of firearms and a safe containing up to \$140,000 in cash, court documents allege. The brother said Jason and Teresa Woods brought over the items the day they were suspended from the Hendricks County sheriff's office that March.

When agents visited Teresa Woods at her mother's home, she blamed Pastor Jaynes for her unwitting involvement in the spice ring. "Both of us have felt

completely taken advantage of by people at that church,” she said, according to court papers.

Woods told investigators she knew Sloan’s family was involved in distributing spice “way before a long time ago,” but she denied her husband had snatched Sloan’s money. The chunk of change inside the safe was likely just \$7,000 to \$8,000, she said, according to court records, and it belonged to the couple as savings.

The former deputy admitted to trying “spice” and “bath salts” prior to them becoming illegal, then said she wished she “never would have met these people,” referring to Jaynes’s crew, prosecutors say.

Her husband, Jason, “fell for, you know, this guy coming around and talking to us about God and bringing us into his church,” she told police. The couple assumed Jaynes ran a “packaging company” and only realized he was a spice king after his arrests made news, court papers state.

“There’s things that Preacher would say to everybody around him to make them think that they weren’t doing anything wrong,” Teresa Woods told investigators.

She added, “As much as I feel like he has taken advantage of me and Jason at the same time, I just, I am still trying to figure out how he could do any of that.”

In December 2014, Boone County prosecutors charged Teresa and Jason Woods with misdemeanor possession of a synthetic drug. Online court records show they entered a diversion program.

But in [January](#) of this year, cops arrested Jason Woods again. This time, he faces felony charges, including dealing in a synthetic drug, bribery, and official misconduct. His trial is scheduled for June.

Sam Ansell, an attorney for Woods, told The Daily Beast it's possible his client was duped by Robert Jaynes much like the other worshippers.

“There's pretty weak circumstantial evidence supporting the state's theory that he provided security [to the drug ring],” Ansell said.

“I don't think the fact that he's a sheriff's deputy would make him less likely to be conned by the person you would least expect to be conning you—a minister of your church.”