

## **Panhandle prosecutor charges with drugs, weapons possession**

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LUBBOCK, Texas — A prominent prosecutor in the Texas Panhandle was charged Wednesday on four federal counts that accuse him of possessing methamphetamine, cocaine and unlawful possession of a firearm by a drug addict.

Rick Roach, a district attorney for five counties, was arrested Tuesday at the Gray County Courthouse before he was scheduled to present cases on the morning docket. He is accused of possessing at least one ounce of the drugs between December and Jan. 3 with the intent of distributing them.

At one of two federal court appearances Wednesday for Roach, the 55-year-old prosecutor denied the charges.

"I'm going to defend this zealously," said Roach, who remains held without bond until a detention hearing in Amarillo on Jan. 18.

U.S. Magistrate Nancy M. Koenig warned Roach against defending himself, saying "you need to get an attorney."

If convicted on all charges, Roach faces more than 50 years in prison.

Kathy Colvin, a spokeswoman with the U.S. Attorney's Office in Dallas, said the case involves an ongoing criminal investigation, and details of the investigation that led to Roach's arrest remain sealed under court order.

Gray County Sheriff Don Copeland, Pampa Police Chief Trevlyn Pitner and Assistant District Attorney Lynn Switzer all declined to talk specifically about the case.

"The FBI asked me not to comment, but they did hit the nail on the head," Copeland said.

Gray County Judge Richard Peet said FBI agents and Drug Enforcement Administration investigators on Tuesday searched Roach's office in Pampa, about 50 miles northeast of Amarillo, and his car. Peet would not say what evidence, if any, was confiscated.

The indictment refers to Roach as "an unlawful user" and "being addicted" to drugs. As an addict, he "knowingly and intentionally" possessed several firearms, including a semi-automatic pistol, according to the indictment.

Roach was 11 days into his second four-year term as district attorney for Gray, Hemphill, Lipscomb, Roberts and Wheeler counties. He has been a licensed attorney for 25 years, and was Roberts County attorney for 10 years before being elected district attorney.

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