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NEW JERSEY MAN SENTENCED TO OVER 12 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR FIREARMS TRAFFICKING

Scheme Exported Guns from Atlanta to New Jersey for Illegal Sale;

Numerous Guns Were Recovered At Crime Scenes

Atlanta, GA - CLOVIS REEVES, 34, of Newark, New Jersey, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Clarence Cooper to over a dozen years in prison on charges of conspiracy to illegally purchase firearms, aiding and abetting the falsification of firearms records, and being a felon in possession of firearms. He was convicted after a jury trial in May, 2008.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of today's sentencing, "The evidence in this case proved that the defendants conspired to illegally buy guns in Georgia and put them on the streets, where some of them were used in violent crimes. In this case most of the guns went to New Jersey, but violence and death are found everywhere that illegal gun trafficking occurs. Now those responsible are being duly punished."

"Some of the guns purchased by these conspirators in Georgia were turning up in crimes in New Jersey within a matter of days," said Jeff Pearce, Acting Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' Atlanta Field Division. "Without such huge multi-jurisdictional cooperation, this scheme would have continued to proliferate and there's no telling how many more guns would have fallen into the hands of juveniles, drug dealers, gang members and convicted felons. These men and women may not have been the perpetrators of violent crime, but they certainly helped to facilitate it."

REEVES was sentenced to 12 years, 7 months in federal prison. There is no parole in the federal system. He was also ordered to serve 3 years of supervised release, and perform 40 hours of community service.

According to United States Attorney Nahmias and information in court: REEVES, a previously convicted felon, was indicted along with seven co-conspirators on August 29, 2007. RICHARD WASHINGTON, 29, of Lawrenceville, Georgia; ANTONIO SUTTON, 28, of Stone Mountain, Georgia; KWAME WALKER, 31, of Lawrenceville, Georgia; TAISHA KENYETTA CLAYTON, 30, of Lawrenceville, Georgia; SAKINAH TOMS, 23, of Atlanta, Georgia; CRAIG JEROME BIRDSOING, 27, of Lawrenceville, Georgia; and LATOVIA DANYELL CUNNINGHAM, 23, of Norcross, Georgia, previously pleaded guilty to multiple counts relating to the gun buying scheme which involved many so-called "straw purchases." All but two testified at REEVES' trial.

The evidence showed that from February 18, 2005, through October 21, 2005, the defendants conspired to give false information to be entered into the records required by law to be kept by federal firearms dealers. The object of the conspiracy was to purchase firearms in the State of Georgia for convicted felons, specifically REEVES and WASHINGTON, thereby concealing the true identity of the actual purchasers, and to resell the firearms for a profit. Six of the defendants, SUTTON, CLAYTON, WALKER, TOMS, BIRDSONG, and CUNNINGHAM, were Georgia residents and were recruited by REEVES to serve as “straw purchasers,” that is, to purchase firearms and to state that they were the actual purchaser, when in fact REEVES was the actual purchaser and intended recipient of the firearms.

WASHINGTON and WALKER transported some of the firearms to REEVES in New Jersey, where the guns were then sold on the street to others. REEVES travelled from New Jersey to Atlanta to transport many of the guns back to New Jersey. Sixty-two weapons were illegally purchased at the direction of REEVES. To date, 13 of those firearms have been recovered from crime scenes in New Jersey. At least one of those weapons has been linked to a homicide in New Jersey. Two had obliterated serial numbers. Fourteen officers from New Jersey law enforcement departments also testified at the trial about those firearms recoveries.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, Atlanta and New York Field Divisions, and the Newark Police Department. (NEWS MEDIA NOTE: ATF recently opened its newest field division in Newark specifically to better focus its resources in the region in the fight against violent crime.)

Assistant United States Attorneys Zahra Karinshak and Katherine M. Hoffer prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan.