



ATF News

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Nashville Field Division

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Contact: Special Agent/ PIO Eric Kehn
(615) 565-1252

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LAWRENCE COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT ADDS TO TENNESSEE SUMMER "H.E.A.T."

*Lawrenceburg man sentenced to 210 month prison term for case that began with
defendant running a stop sign*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Michael Wayne Murphy, 61, was sentenced in U.S. District Court on July 18, 2005 to 17 ½ years in federal prison for being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm and being an armed career criminal. Under federal law an armed career criminal is defined as a person who has been convicted of three or more serious drug or violent felonies.

U.S. District Court Judge William J. Haynes for the Middle Judicial District of Tennessee also placed Murphy on six months supervised release that he must complete upon his release from prison. There is no parole in the federal prison system.

U.S. Attorney James K. Vines, Sheriff William Dorning of the Lawrence County Sheriff's Department and Special Agent in Charge James M. Cavanaugh of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Nashville Field Division announced the sentencing. Murphy was previously convicted in a jury trial in February of 2005 for violating Title 18 of the U.S. Code, Section 922(g)(1)-being a convicted felon in possession of a firearm. Convicted felons are prohibited from possessing firearms and ammunition under federal law. Murphy was previously convicted of arson in 1988 and received a 10 year sentence in Giles County Criminal Court.

According to facts introduced during trial, a Lawrence County Sheriff's Deputy made a traffic stop on Murphy's vehicle for running a stop sign at the intersection of Pleasant Valley Rd. and Weakley Loop Rd. in Ethridge, Tennessee on December 31, 2005. Upon making contact with Murphy, the deputy noticed a rifle in plain view inside of Murphy's truck. The deputy asked Murphy for his driver's license and Murphy stated he did not have one. Murphy was subsequently placed under arrest for driving on a suspended license and unlawful possession of a weapon. ATF was later contacted for assistance.

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“The Murphy case is a simple but solid case. If you break the gun laws you will be aggressively prosecuted. Congress has enacted stiff penalties to keep illegal guns out of the hands of violent criminals. I’m sure that Murphy never expected that running a stop sign on New Year’s Eve would end up getting him almost 18 years in federal prison. If you are a felon and you have a gun, your life circumstances may end up exposing you to some H.E.A.T. too” stated ATF Special Agent in Charge James Cavanaugh.

The successful resolution of the case is the result of investigative efforts of the Lawrence County Sheriff’s Department, ATF and the U.S. Attorney’s Office under a violent crime reduction initiative called Project Safe Neighborhoods, known locally as H.E.A.T. (Help Eliminate Armed Thugs).

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