



Department of Justice

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FORMER GBI AGENT PLEADS GUILTY TO RECEIVING KICKBACKS IN GUN SELLING SCHEME

Rome, GA- JAMES R. GARMON, 52, of Cartersville, Georgia, a former special agent with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, pleaded guilty today to a two count Criminal Information charging him with receiving corrupt payments and failure to properly maintain firearms records. The charges relate to a scheme to receive kickback payments in exchange for arranging the sale of firearms seized by the Drug Task Force Unit of the Bartow County Sheriff's Office to a local pawn shop.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of the case, "This longtime law enforcement officer ended his career and now will likely go to prison because he wanted to make just a few thousand bucks extra by taking kickbacks. We have no tolerance for public officials who break the law, particularly the officers who are sworn to enforce it."

"It is extremely disappointing when any GBI employee is implicated in criminal activity, especially an individual sworn to uphold the law," said GBI Director Vernon Keenan. "The GBI cooperated fully with the FBI's investigation into James Garmon and took immediate administrative action when the allegations were brought to our attention."

According to Nahmias, the Criminal Information, and the Plea Agreement in this case: In 2003, GARMON met with officials at the Bartow County Sheriff's Office and agreed to act as an agent of that agency for the purpose of selling directly, and without benefit of a public bid process, firearms seized or forfeited by the Sheriff's Office. Georgia law requires that firearms seized by a Sheriff's Office either be retained by the Sheriff's Office for use in law enforcement, destroyed, or disposed of by advertising and selling the firearms to the highest bidder at a public auction. Between December 2004 and October 2005, GARMON brokered at least three separate deals between the Bartow County Sheriff's Office and "Warren's Pawn & Jewelry" for the sale of at least 81 firearms previously seized by the Sheriff's Office. These sales were done without the benefit of a public bid process. The market value of the firearms exceeded \$5000.

In exchange for providing firearms directly to the pawn shop, GARMON personally received kickback payments in cash, taking at least \$1,600 from the pawn shop

to use for his own personal benefit. GARMON did not disclose these payments to the Sheriff's Office. GARMON, a federal firearms licensee, was also in possession of a sawed-off shotgun which he knowingly failed to properly maintain a record of, as required by federal law. GARMON resigned from the GBI in March 2006, after the GBI was advised of the results of this investigation.

Sentencing for GARMON has been set for October 6, 2006 at 1:30 p.m. before United States District Judge Harold L. Murphy in Rome. GARMON faces a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 on the bribery charge, and a maximum of 1 year in prison and a fine of \$100,000 on the charge of failure to properly maintain records.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the FBI and ATF.

Assistant United States Attorneys Glenn Baker and Kim Dammers are prosecuting 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.