



Department of Justice

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FORMER CITY OF ROCKMART POLICE OFFICER, WIFE, FOUND GUILTY IN GUN POSSESSION AND FAKE FINGERPRINT SCHEME

Evidence Shows Convicted Felon Had Help Getting Guns

Rome, GA - After a six-day trial, a federal jury today returned guilty verdicts against former Rockmart Police Officer JEDSON LEIST, 36, and his wife INGRID ARNETH, 46, both of Acworth, Georgia. LEIST was convicted on all 14 counts, and ARNETH on all 7 counts of firearms and fraud charges related to the acquisition of guns by a convicted felon. The jury deliberated just over one day.

LEIST was found guilty on charges of possessing firearms after having being previously convicted of a felony and a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, which made it illegal for him to possess firearms. LEIST and ARNETH were found guilty of making false representations to gun dealers when ARNETH purchased guns for LEIST, claiming that the guns were for herself. LEIST was also convicted on charges of submitting a fake fingerprint card to help get his job as a police officer.

"The evidence proved that Leist, lied to the Rockmart Police Department and the FBI so that Leist could become a police officer and carry guns despite his criminal past," said David E. Nahmias, United States Attorney. "The jury recognized that these criminal acts exposed the Rockmart community to unnecessary risk by placing firearms--and a badge--in the hands of a convicted felon willing to engage in fraud and deception."

"As our investigation of this now former police officer demonstrates, ATF's enforcement of laws that prohibit the criminal misuse of firearms knows no boundaries," said Special Agent in Charge Vanessa McLemore of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. "Felons who possess firearms are a threat to public safety and must to be held accountable. It appears that by the jury rendering a guilty verdict, they agree with ATF and the 12 counts of Gun Control Act violations charged in this case."

A third defendant in the case, CAREY HIGGINS, 29, of Cartersville, Georgia, who was also a former Rockmart officer, faced charges of allegedly assisting LEIST in his application to become a Rockmart officer. The jury could not reach a decision on the

charges against HIGGINS. A decision to retry HIGGINS has not yet been made by the United States Attorney's Office.

According to Nahmias and the evidence at trial: LEIST was arrested by the City of Rockmart Police Department on June 2, 2006, for making a false statement and submitting a false employment application. At the time of his arrest, LEIST was carrying three firearms: a Glock 9mm caliber pistol in his holster; a Smith & Wesson .38 revolver in an ankle holster; and a Bushmaster M4 carbine rifle with a laser sight. In his car, law enforcement officers recovered a Glock .40 caliber pistol. In his residence, law enforcement officers recovered two Sig-Sauer pistols, a Smith & Wesson pistol, and a 12-gauge shotgun.

Prior to his arrest, LEIST had been a police officer with the City of Rockmart, Georgia in Polk County for approximately one year. As a part of his duties as a police officer for the City of Rockmart, LEIST carried a firearm. LEIST had declined the firearm routinely issued by the City and instead chose to carry his own personal firearm.

Unbeknownst to the City of Rockmart, and prior to his hiring as a police officer, LEIST had been convicted of a felony as well as a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence, both of which made it illegal for him to possess firearms. He had been convicted in Colorado of those crimes in 1998 and 1993, respectively.

In late 2004, LEIST sought a job as an officer in the Rockmart Police Department and enlisted the aid of his friend HIGGINS, who then worked for the Department as a sergeant. In or about June 2005, HIGGINS helped LEIST generate a false fingerprint card as part of LEIST's application. The actual fingerprints on the application card belonged to a relative of LEIST. In addition, HIGGINS took the lead in conducting the background check on behalf of the Rockmart Police Department and further aided in the false application. HIGGINS signed the fingerprint card and represented that the fingerprints were in fact those of LEIST. The fingerprint card was used to determine LEIST's criminal history. During this period of time, ARNETH continued to purchase firearms for LEIST. Over a two and a half year period, ARNETH purchased approximately 29 guns, including the two guns used by LEIST as his police service weapon and backup weapon.

The Chief of Police of the City of Rockmart, Larry Harris, contacted federal authorities after the local arrest and requested a federal investigation.

The defendants are expected to be sentenced on January 24, 2008, before United States District Court Judge Robert L. Vining Jr. The maximum sentence for LEIST is 85 years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$3,500,000. The maximum sentence for ARNETH is 35 years in federal prison and a fine of \$1,750,000.

The case was investigated by Special Agents of the ATF and FBI. Assistance was

provided by the Rockmart Police Department, the Haralson County Sheriff's Department and the Paulding County Sheriff's Department.

Assistant United States Attorney Bret R. Williams is prosecuting this 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.