



Department of Justice

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EIGHT INDICTED IN EAST COAST GUN TRAFFICKING OPERATION

First Court Appearances Made Late Today for Defendants Accused of Exporting Guns from Atlanta to New Jersey

Atlanta, GA – CLOVIS REEVES, 33, of Newark, New Jersey; 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 BIRDSONG, 27, of Lawrenceville, Georgia; and LATOVIA DANYELL CUNNINGHAM, 23, of Norcross, Georgia were indicted late yesterday by a federal grand jury on multiple charges relating to a gun buying scheme, often through so-called “straw purchases,” which resulted in violent crimes outside of Georgia.

“This case is another example of guns being procured in Georgia and used for violent crimes in other parts of the United States. Fortunately, through the hard work and coordination of ATF agents in New Jersey and Georgia, this group will no longer be exporting violence and death through illegally-obtained street guns,” said United States Attorney David E. Nahmias.

“Just as drug users need drug dealers, violent criminals need firearms traffickers to supply the guns they so effectively use to protect their dope, commit robberies, car jack motorists and generally terrorize civilized society,” said Scott Sweetow, Assistant Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives’ Atlanta Field Division. “With these arrests, that many fewer guns will be able to find their way into the hands of those who would use them to break the law.”

“Gun tracing, gun tracing, gun tracing... these words need to be a top priority for our local police officers. Because of the Newark, N.J. Police Department’s commitment to trace all their crime guns, we were able to identify not only the ‘straw purchasers’ who bought these weapons, but also the traffickers who brought them back north and put them into the hands of criminals, including violent gang members,” said William McMahan, Special Agent in Charge of ATF’s New York Field Division. “The result of successful

crime gun tracing is the development of criminal intelligence and when used properly can help put illegal gun runners in jail.”

According to Nahmias and the 16-count indictment handed down by the grand jury late yesterday: From on or about February 18, 2005, through on or about October 21, 2005, the defendants allegedly conspired to give false information to be entered into the records required by law to be kept by a federal firearms dealer. 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 allegedly recruited by REEVES and WASHINGTON to serve as “straw purchasers,” that is, to purchase firearms and to state that they were the actual purchaser, when in fact REEVES and WASHINGTON were the actual purchasers and intended recipients of the firearms.

REEVES and WASHINGTON used straw purchasers to purchase firearms because at all times relevant to the conspiracy, REEVES and WASHINGTON were previously convicted felons and REEVES was not a resident of the State of Georgia. WASHINGTON transported some of the firearms to REEVES in New Jersey, where the guns were then sold on the street to others. At least one firearm was sold on the street here in Georgia. Some of the firearms were later used in crimes in New Jersey and Georgia.

Members of the public are reminded that the charges contain only allegations. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of ATF’s Atlanta and New York Field Divisions as well as detectives of the Newark Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorneys Zahra S. Karinshak and Katherine Monahan are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), United States Attorney, or Charysse 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 <http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan/>.