



U.S. Department of Justice

**Terrence Berg
United States Attorney
Eastern District of Michigan**

***Suite 2001
211 West Fort Street
Detroit, Michigan 48226-3277***

For Immediate Release:

**Contact: Gina Balaya (313) 226-9758
Vera Fedorak - ATF (313) 202-3407**

April 24, 2009

Event: Sentenced

Defendant: RICARDO TOLLIVER et al

**LEADER OF INTERNATIONAL FIREARMS TRAFFICKING NETWORK
SENTENCED TO 32 YEARS IN PRISON
*Nine Others Convicted and Sentenced***

RICARDO TOLLIVER, 33, formerly of Cincinnati, Ohio was sentenced in federal court in Detroit to 32 years in prison after having admitted to being the leader of a network which acquired, obliterated, and smuggled firearms from the United States into Canada in exchange for Canadian drugs, announced United States Attorney Terrence Berg.

Berg was joined in the announcement by Thomas E. Brandon, Special Agent In Charge of the Detroit Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Sheriff Tilman Crutchfield, Monroe County Sheriff's Department, Commissioner Julian Fantino, Ontario Provincial Police, Deputy Chief Jennifer Evans, Peel Regional Police and Marc Saltmarsh, Ontario Crown Attorney's Office.

Tolliver pleaded guilty before United States District Judge George Caram Steeh on January 5, 2009 to seven counts of various firearms and narcotics violations.

The ATF investigation, Kentucky Bluegrass, named after the state origin of the trafficked firearms, began as a result of a traffic stop by deputies of the Monroe County Sheriff's Department in March 2005. During that stop deputies uncovered sixteen firearms, all that had the serial numbers obliterated, hidden in the trunk of a car. Also during the stop, one of the occupants used his cell phone to call Riccardo Tolliver and told him about the stop. ATF immediately initiated an investigation of Tolliver in cooperation with Canada's Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit (PWEU) and ultimately identified Riccardo Tolliver as the head of a group of firearms traffickers operating in the northern Kentucky area that traded the firearms for Canadian marijuana.

Canadian authorities discovered that Tolliver was manufacturing and distributing handguns to Canadian citizens. Tolliver was arrested while selling one of his manufactured handguns. Shortly after his arrest in Canada, Tolliver admitted to ATF agents that he is responsible for smuggling approximately 500 firearms into Canada.

While held on Canadian charges in Ontario, Tolliver agreed to be returned to the United States to face American charges. U.S. Attorney Berg commended Canadian officials, particularly the Ontario Crown Attorney's Office, for facilitating Tolliver's return to the U.S.

According to the indictment from on or about November 2004 through May 2005, Tolliver, a United States citizen residing in Canada, received requests from marijuana traffickers in Canada for firearms. Tolliver would instruct co-defendant Lamarcus Jones to acquire specific types of handguns from gun dealers in northern Kentucky through the use of "straw purchasers". Straw purchasers buy guns for other people while falsely representing that they are buying the guns for themselves. Once the guns were purchased, co-defendants would remove the serial numbers in Kentucky then transport the firearms through Detroit, Michigan and smuggle them into Ontario, Canada where they would be exchanged for marijuana.

During the course of the investigation it was discovered that some of the guns which Tolliver was responsible for smuggling into Canada were recovered at crime scenes in the greater Toronto area. Specifically, one of the straw purchased guns was used in the shooting of a Canadian law enforcement officer and another was the primary weapon used in the killings of eight Bandito motorcycle gang members in Ontario.

United State Attorney Berg stated, "This case demonstrates what can be accomplished when U.S. and Canadian law enforcement bring their particular expertise to bear on a criminal organization. This organization was dismantled because of the coordination of law enforcement resources and intelligence which has increased our border security and awareness."

Special Agent in Charge Brandon stated, "The dismantling of international firearms smuggling rings, as are domestic traffickers, is a top priority for ATF and a "shared responsibility" for law enforcement on both sides of the border. Their sole motivation is for profit - whether monetary or in exchange for drugs - by supplying guns to drug dealers, gang members or other violent criminals. Our experience shows that trafficked firearms typically have a short time-to-crime."

Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Julian Fantino stated, "The scope of firearms trafficking, domestic and international, is beyond the investigative capacity of any one particular law enforcement agency. In Ontario, the Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit (PWEU) provides a co-ordinated approach to combat illegal guns through a multi-jurisdictional approach that takes enforcement action against persons involved in the illegal movement of firearms. The decision of the court proves that this cooperative approach works, that it helps keep our communities safe and that it is here to stay until our work is done."

Ontario Provincial Police Detective Inspector Steve Clegg, head of the PWEU said; "It is imperative that law enforcement agencies work together to prevent firearms related crime. Project Bluegrass is a fine example of how effective these partnerships can be at putting a

dent in the spread of illegal handguns on both sides of our boarder”.

The nine other defendants in this investigation who pleaded guilty and were sentenced include:

LAMARCUS TERRANCE JONES, 29 of Covington, Kentucky pleaded guilty to two counts of Use of a Firearm During and in Relation to a Drug Trafficking Crime and received a sentence of 140 months in prison.

ANTHONY DEEAGO LIGHTFOOT, 47 of Covington, Kentucky pleaded guilty to three felony counts including Possession and Transportation of Firearm With Obliterated Serial Number in Interstate Commerce, Conspiracy to Possess with Intent to Distribute Controlled Substances and Use of a Firearm during and In Relation to a Drug Trafficking Crime. Lightfoot received a sentence of 60 months in prison.

PHILLIP WALLS, 47 of Covington, Kentucky pleaded guilty to two counts of Use of a Firearm During and In Relation to a Drug Trafficking Crime, Aiding and Abetting and received a sentence of 72 months in prison.

MICHELLE WALLS, 45 of Covington, Kentucky pleaded guilty to Possession and Transportation of Firearms with Obliterated Serial Numbers in Interstate and Foreign Commerce and Use of a Firearm During and in Relation to a Drug Trafficking Crime and received a sentence of 30 months in prison.

JAMES CRAMER, 53 of Covington, Kentucky pleaded guilty to one count of Possession and Transportation of Firearms with Obliterated Serial Numbers in Interstate and Foreign Commerce. Cramer was sentenced to time served (25 months) and two years of supervised release.

LINDA MASON, 54 of Fort Thomas, Kentucky pleaded guilty to Possession and Transportation of Firearms with Obliterated Serial Numbers in Interstate and Foreign

Commerce and received 13 months in prison.

TONYA SULLIVAN, 27 of Newport, Kentucky pleaded guilty to Possession and Transportation of Firearms with Obliterated Serial Numbers in Interstate and Foreign Commerce and received 12 months in prison.

AMANDA CHAMBERS, 27 of Newport, Kentucky pleaded guilty to Possession and Transportation of Firearms in Interstate and Foreign Commerce and received a sentence of 20 months in prison.

LISA MOECKEL, 36 of Newport, Kentucky pleaded guilty to Possession and Transportation of Firearms in Interstate and Foreign Commerce and received a sentence of 2 years probation.

Mr. Berg commended the agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, deputies of the Monroe County Sheriff's Department, the Canadian Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit, Toronto Police Service, Peel Regional Police and U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement as well as the Canadian Immigration and Customs Enforcement for conducting an exhaustive investigation which resulted in the convictions of this criminal organization and well as the Ontario Crown Attorney's Office for their cooperation and assistance in the prosecution of Mr. Tolliver.