



Department of Justice

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FORMER CITY OF ROCKMART POLICE OFFICER PLEADS GUILTY IN FAKE FINGERPRINT SCHEME

Evidence Shows Former Officer Helped Convicted Felon Get Police Job

Rome, GA - Former Rockmart Police Officer CAREY HIGGINS, 29, of Cartersville, Georgia, pleaded guilty today to a charge of making materially false statements to federal authorities and the FBI in connection with the submission of false fingerprints to the Rockmart Police Department by his co-defendant Jedson Leist, a convicted felon. With HIGGINS' help, LEIST was able to conceal his criminal past and successfully apply to become a Rockmart police officer. Before his guilty plea pursuant to an agreement, HIGGINS was facing retrial in this matter for the crimes of making false statements; the illegal transfer of a firearm; and wire and mail fraud charges.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said of the case, "This case should serve as a stark reminder that the making of false statements and the submission of false information to government authorities, especially in connection with seeking a position of public trust, is a serious criminal matter."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias, and information presented in court: In late 2004, Leist sought a job as a police officer with the Rockmart Police Department. 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 Leist to possess firearms. In or about June 2005, Leist generated a false fingerprint card which he submitted as part of his police application. The actual fingerprints on the application card belonged to a relative of Leist. HIGGINS, who was already an officer with the Rockmart Police Department at the time, took the lead in handling the check of Leist's criminal history on behalf of the Rockmart Police Department. To make sure that Leist would pass, HIGGINS signed the false fingerprint card and represented that the prints were those of Leist. The fingerprint card was submitted by mail to the FBI, which faxed back its response.

Sentencing is set for May 8, 2008, before United States District Court Judge Robert L. Vining, Jr. in Rome. The maximum sentence for HIGGINS is five (5) years in

federal prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

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

Assistant United States Attorney Bret R. Williams is 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.