



**U.S. Department of Justice**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**COUSINS SENTENCED FOR GUN-RUNNING CONSPIRACY**

Two Flint-area cousins have been sentenced in federal court this week for conspiring to obtain firearms illegally and selling them in Canada, United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy announced. Murphy was joined in the announcement with Special Agent in Charge Valerie J. Goddard, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

Dante L. Rison, 29, of Mt. Morris was sentenced to 57 months' imprisonment on May 31, 2007, by United States District Judge Paul V. Gadola. His cousin Kermit L. Reeves, 26, who was residing in Toronto, Canada at the time of the offense, was sentenced to 44 months' imprisonment on June 1, 2007, by Judge Gadola. Both men had pleaded guilty to an indictment charging that they conspired to make false statements to licensed firearms dealers during the purchase of firearms. During their guilty pleas they admitted that they had recruited other persons to purchase firearms in their own names, falsely concealing the fact that they were being paid for by, and immediately given to Rison or Reeves.

United States Attorney Stephen J. Murphy stated, "Today's sentences show the dire legal consequences that await those who traffic illegally in firearms. Obliterating serial numbers makes tracing guns much more difficult, and increases the likelihood that the weapon will be used in a crime."

SAC Goddard said, "These illegal gun traffickers are directly responsible for putting crime guns on the streets of Canada. We are committed to identifying and prosecuting the sources of illegal firearms, whether intended for criminal use in Michigan, or elsewhere." She added, "We have seen an increase in guns going across our northern border into Canada and have formed a valuable partnership with our law enforcement counterparts there to prevent, detect and prosecute international firearms traffickers."

During the sentencings Judge Gadola noted that the offense was a very serious one, involving at least seven such “straw purchasers” who were paid to make the illegal transactions between June and December of 2005. According to the uncontested facts in the presentence report, the offense involved at least 45 firearms - primarily pistols. Many of the serial numbers on these pistols were later obliterated. The firearms were then transported to, and distributed in Canada - where strict Canadian gun laws made them much more valuable than they were in the United States. By the time of sentencing at least six of these pistols had been recovered by Canadian law enforcement officers during investigation of Canadian crimes.

Judge Gadola found that Dante Rison had been instrumental in recruiting and directing the straw purchasers, while Kermit Reeves had the contacts to sell the pistols illegally in Canada; both were held responsible for organizing and leading the conspiracy. Rison's sentence was longer than Reeves' due to his prior criminal history. Rison, however, was allowed to remain on bond pending his self-surrender to a federal prison. Reeves, who was deported from Canada and has been in federal custody since November 2006, remains in the custody of the United States Marshal and will be transferred to federal prison.

The case was investigated by the ATF Flint Field Office with the assistance of the Provincial Weapons Enforcement Unit of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP), and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert Haviland.