



Department of Justice

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**FORMER SHERIFF SENTENCED FOR TRAFFICKING IN STOLEN
MOTOR VEHICLES, REMOVING AND ALTERING MOTOR VEHICLE
IDENTIFICATION NUMBERS, MAIL FRAUD, AND AIDING AND
ABETTING POSSESSION OF A FIREARM BY A CONVICTED FELON**

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that RONALD R. “GUN” FICKLIN, age 53, former Sheriff of St. Helena Parish, was sentenced today by United States District Court Judge James J. Brady to a term of imprisonment of 63 months following his guilty pleas last February to seventeen counts of a superseding indictment. The charges for which FICKLIN was sentenced are as follows: one count of trafficking in motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts with removed and altered identification numbers, one count of removing and altering motor vehicle identification numbers, fourteen counts of mail fraud, and one count of aiding and abetting possession of a firearm by a convicted felon.

The Factual Basis filed by the United States in support of FICKLIN’s guilty pleas described FICKLIN’s participation in the operation of a “chop shop” in St. Helena Parish at which the VINs of stolen vehicles were replaced with VINs from salvaged vehicles purchased at auction. In particular, the Factual Basis alleged that FICKLIN sold a stolen truck to the Mayor of Greensburg and that FICKLIN and another individual switched the VIN plate on a stolen Mitsubishi Galant. In support of the mail fraud charges, the Factual Basis also alleged that FICKLIN defrauded the Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections by using state inmates to work at the chop shop and on his own vehicles. Finally, the Factual Basis alleged that FICKLIN bought a shotgun for a close friend who was a convicted felon.

Barry Edward Dawsey, James Jackson, Mitchell Tidwell, Denman Cutrer and Kevin Simmons have pled guilty in federal court to charges related to their participation in the chop shop. In addition, Cori Leigh Clark and Alton Hoyt McNabb, II, pled guilty to tampering with a witness in the case by attacking a detective with the Louisiana State Police who was involved in the investigation.

U.S. Attorney Dugas said, “Public corruption is corrosive and harmful to government and to the citizens that government officials are elected to serve. We ask law abiding citizens who witness corruption to report it to the FBI or the U.S. Attorney's Office.”

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; the Louisiana State Police; the Mississippi

Highway Patrol; and the Mississippi Department of Agriculture; and was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys M. Patricia Jones and Ian F. Hipwell.

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