



NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

February 24, 2005

United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that on February 23, 2005, a federal grand jury indicted Ronald R. "Gun" Ficklin, age 51, a resident of Greensburg, Louisiana, on multiple felony charges, including conspiracy, trafficking in motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts with removed and altered identification numbers, removing and altering motor vehicle identification numbers, mail fraud, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and misprision of a felony. Ficklin is the Sheriff of St. Helena Parish.

The indictment charges that B&D Auto Sales, located in St. Helena Parish, was licensed by the State of Louisiana as a vehicle dealer, a used car buyer, a dismantler of motor vehicles, and a salvage dealer. Ficklin was permitted to purchase and sell salvaged vehicles on behalf of B&D Auto Sales. From some time in 2000 and continuing to at least July 10, 2003, Ficklin and others allegedly conspired to obtain, disguise, and sell stolen motor vehicles and motor vehicle parts. Ficklin's co-conspirators allegedly stole motor vehicles, including tractors and other heavy equipment. The indictment charges that Ficklin, along with his co-conspirators, removed the vehicle identification numbers (VINs) from stolen vehicles to disguise the identity of the vehicles. Ficklin and his co-conspirators allegedly

removed parts from stolen vehicles for use on other vehicles. It is further alleged that Ficklin purchased salvaged vehicles at auto auctions and that he and his co-conspirators replaced the VINs on stolen vehicles with VINs from salvaged vehicles. Stolen vehicles, including tractors and other heavy equipment, were also transported to the State of Mississippi for sale. The indictment further charges that Ficklin would allow inmates housed at the St. Helena Parish Jail to work on stolen vehicles at B&D Auto Sales. It is alleged that Ficklin signed affidavits of vehicle inspection in connection with the titling of stolen motor vehicles and motor vehicles with stolen parts.

The indictment charges that in March 2000, Ficklin aided another person who had been convicted of a felony to possess a firearm, namely a Mossberg 12 gauge shotgun.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Louisiana State Police, and the U.S. Attorney's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys M. Patricia Jones and Ian F. Hipwell.

If convicted on all charges, defendant faces a maximum sentence of imprisonment of 68 years, a fine of \$2.5 million, \$1,000 in special assessments, and three years supervised release.

NOTE: An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until and unless he is proven guilty at trial.

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