



## ATF Violent Gang Task Force

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### SEATTLE GANG TASK FORCE ARRESTS MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES OF EAST AFRICAN POSSE

SEATTLE – The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Violent Gang Task Force arrested four members and associates of the East African Posse last week.

A federal grand jury indicted Tewoldeberhan Mekonnen and Awad Yimer Aynisher for armed narcotics trafficking and illegal narcotics distribution. Daniel Mengisteab Yohannes, Robel Mekonen, Liban Farah Ali and Merhawi Hagos Haile were charged with narcotics trafficking. Aynisher and Haile remain at large.

The arrests last week brought to 16 the number of defendants who have been charged in federal court in connection with the investigation. Previous charges range from distribution of crack and powder cocaine, firearms violations, kidnapping and assault. If convicted, some of those indicted face mandatory minimum sentences of 10 years to life in prison.

The ATF Violent Gang Task Force was formed in May 2005 with full-time investigators and support staff from ATF, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Seattle Police Department. Its mission is to investigate and arrest criminals who terrorize and intimidate communities through violent crime and narcotics trafficking. Through the ATF Violent Gang Task Force, investigators have effectively focused federal and local resources to address the illegal and violent activities of criminal offenders, including the East African Posse.

“In law enforcement we have a social and professional responsibility to rid our community of those who call themselves gang members and continuously infest our communities with devastating activities such as narcotics trafficking and the illegal possession or trafficking of illegal weapons,” said ATF Seattle Special Agent in Charge Kelvin N. Crenshaw.

“Targeting organized groups of violent criminal predators is one of the most effective ways we know to reduce crime and fear in the communities of Seattle,” said Chief R. Gil Kerlikowske. “The success we have seen in this operation renews our commitment to the task force and the great work it is doing.”