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### ICE and ATF takedown major international firearms trafficking ring

ORLANDO, Fla. - Six individuals, involved in what has been called the most significant Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Office of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) firearms trafficking investigation in Central Florida history, were sentenced to prison earlier this week on firearms trafficking charges.

The ongoing investigation dubbed, "Operation Castaway," is an intensive and wide ranging Organized Crime and Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) firearms trafficking investigation conducted by ATF, ICE HSI, the Orange County Sheriff's Office, the Osceola County Sheriff's Office, the Brevard County Sheriff's Office, and the Miami-Dade Police Department.

On Monday and Tuesday, U.S. District Judge Gregory A. Presnell sentenced several of the Operation Castaway defendants including Hugh Crumpler, III, who was sentenced to 30 months in federal prison for dealing firearms without a license and unlawfully possessing short barreled rifles; Ramon Lopez, Jr., sentenced to 74 months in federal prison for dealing firearms without a license and unlawfully possessing short barreled rifles; Carlos Humberto Guillen-Rivera, sentenced to 84 months in prison for conspiracy, that is, being an illegal alien in possession of firearms, illegally exporting firearms and illegally possessing short barreled rifles; Cesar Augusto Guillen-Rivera, sentenced to 65 months in federal prison for conspiring to possess and illegally possessing short barreled rifles, as well as, being an illegal alien in possession of firearms, and illegally exporting firearms; Erlin Javier Guillen-Rivera, sentenced to 63 months in federal prison for conspiring to and illegally possess short barreled rifles, being an illegal alien in possession of firearms, and illegally exporting firearms; and Hector Saenz, sentenced to 46 months for conspiracy. The Guillen-Rivera brothers and Hector Saenz will be processed for removal from the United States based upon their criminal convictions.

Another Operation Castaway defendant, Jesus Puentes, pleaded guilty on Aug. 31 to conspiring to and illegally possessing short barreled rifles and will be sentenced on Nov. 18.

Two additional defendants, Antonia Ruiz-Varela and Manuel Dejesus Carrasco-Ruiz, remain fugitives and are still at large. Any information about their whereabouts should be forwarded to ATF or the ICE tipline at 1-866-347-2423.

"Gun and drug trafficking fuels violence by criminal organizations and threatens the security of the people along our borders and throughout the country," said Susan McCormick, special agent in charge of ICE HSI in Tampa, Fla. "ICE special agents will continue working jointly with our law enforcement partners to utilize our expertise in import and export enforcement in order to keep our citizens safe and secure."

Crumpler has trafficked for several years more than 1,000 firearms to various groups and the other criminally charged individuals, who, in turn, have exported these weapons all over Central and South America and to Puerto Rico. The defendants trafficked in Glock semi-automatic handguns, Fabrique Nationale Herstal 5.7x28mm semi-automatic handguns (FN pistols), and AR-15 styled short-barreled rifles, among other firearms.

The FN pistols in particular are weapons of choice for drug trafficking organizations and paramilitary groups. Easily concealed and capable of firing a rifle round of ammunition that can penetrate law enforcement body armor, the pistols are referred to by cartel members in Mexico, South America, Central America, and Puerto Rico as "matapolicias" or "cop killers." AR-15-styled rifles are popular among the same criminal groups.

Firearms like those involved in this investigation are often smuggled through Honduras and other Central and South American countries before being used in violent crimes in Mexico and other countries in the region. A number of the firearms trafficked by the defendants in Operation Castaway have been linked to violent crimes around the world.

Several firearms trafficked by Crumpler and Ramon Lopez, Jr. were used in crimes associated with the Torres Sabana Drug Trafficking Organization, a notorious and violent drug trafficking organization in Puerto Rico. Another firearm, a Glock pistol, was recovered in Medellin, Colombia, after being used to commit a homicide. Another firearm was found in the possession of a hit man for Oficina de Envigado, an organization described by the Department of Treasury as "a violent Medellin-based organized crime group that engages in large-scale drug trafficking and money laundering activities in Colombia."

"Eliminating this type of organization and taking its high-level weaponry off the streets will increase safety not only for our citizens but for people abroad. I commend the work of the federal agents in bringing this group down, as well as the contributions of our local partner agencies," said U.S. Attorney A. Brian Albritton.

"This Orlando ATF investigation of just one unlicensed individual revealed a firearms trafficking ring so far reaching it funneled hundreds of firearms to criminal markets both domestic and international," said Virginia O'Brien, special agent in charge of central and northern Florida ATF operations.

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U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security.

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