



Department of Justice

United States Attorney Robert Pitman
Western District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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THREE INDICTED IN CONNECTION WITH ODESSA-BASED FIREARMS STRAW PURCHASING AND TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATION

Federal authorities last night arrested the remaining defendant, Odessa, TX, resident Brian Connell, age 28, charged in connection with a firearms straw purchasing and trafficking investigation announced United States Attorney Robert Pitman and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Dallas Field Office Special Agent in Charge Robert Champion.

Connell, who was arrested in Roswell, NM, as well as former Odessa residents Miguel Angel Compean, age 32, and his wife, Michelle Compean, age 27, are charged in a ten-count federal grand jury indictment returned last month with conspiracy to smuggle firearms from the United States. In addition to the conspiracy charge, Miguel Compean is charged with four counts of providing fraudulent or fictitious information while purchasing a firearm, one count of making a false statement in the acquisition of a firearm (straw purchasing) and, two counts of aggravated identity theft; Connell, two counts of making false statements in the acquisition of a firearm (straw purchasing); and Michelle Compean, one count of providing fraudulent or fictitious information while purchasing a firearm.

According to the indictment, the defendants conspired to surreptitiously purchase approximately 100 firearms, including AK-47 style rifles and pistols, from various firearms dealers in Odessa, Fort Worth, Dallas, Brenham and Mesquite, TX, in order to smuggle them from the United States into Mexico during a 13-month period beginning in December 2011. The indictment alleges that Miguel Compean recruited his wife, Michelle, and Brian Connell to purchase firearms on his behalf. The indictment also alleges that Miguel Compean illegally purchased firearms for himself by using a relative's name, date of birth and social security number; and, that Michelle Compean and Brian Connell both made false statements on ATF Form 4473 at the time of a firearm purchase claiming to be the actual buyer. Furthermore, Miguel Compean allegedly paid Connell \$300 for each firearm that Connell straw purchased and gave to Compean.

Connell remains in federal custody awaiting transfer to the Midland Division of the Western District of Texas. Beginning at 9:00am tomorrow before U.S. Magistrate Judge David Counts in Midland, Miguel Compean, who has been in state custody on unrelated charges, is scheduled to have his arraignment/detention hearing; Michelle Compean, who was arrested last month in Greenville, is scheduled to have her initial appearance/arraignment. No trial date has been scheduled.

(more)

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Upon conviction, defendants face up to five years in federal prison on the conspiracy charge; up to five years in federal prison for each charge of providing false information while purchasing a firearm; up to ten years in federal prison for each charge of making false statement during a firearms purchase (straw purchasing); and, a consecutive two years in federal prison for each charge of aggravated identity theft.

This case was investigated by ATF agents. Assistant United States Attorney Will Tatum is prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

An indictment is merely a charge and should not be considered as evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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