



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Texas

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Corpus Man Gets Maximum Sentence for Unlawful Manufacturing and Trafficking of Firearms

CORPUS CHRISTI, Texas – Michael Yarbrough, 22, of Corpus Christi, has landed in federal prison for 10 years for the unlawful manufacture and trafficking of AK-47 type firearms, United States Attorney Kenneth Magidson announced today.

Yarbrough was indicted along with Ashley Yarbrough aka Ashley Phillips, 25, and Stephen Atkinson, 29, in July 25, 2012, and arrested shortly thereafter. Michael and Ashley Yarbrough entered their guilty pleas before U.S. District Judge Nelva Gonzales Ramos a few days prior to trial on Jan. 8, 2013, while Atkinson had previously entered a plea of guilty in September 2012.

Today, Judge Ramos handed Michael Yarborough a term of 120 months in federal prison, the statutory maximum allowed by law. The sentence will be followed by a three-year-term of supervised release. Evidence presented at the sentencing hearing included Michael Yarbrough's purchase of more than 900 parts kits and firearm receivers over a seven-month period, totaling more than \$200,000. Also, evidence was presented that Yarbrough was selling the firearms to someone on the Mexico-U.S. border for further transport into Mexico. Several of the AK-47s manufactured by Michael Yarbrough have been seized in Mexico, including one seizure where three men were killed. The government's evidence included the fact that this was the largest gun seizure in the history of the Corpus Christi Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

Ashley Yarbrough, who had pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of making a false statement to federal agents was also sentenced today to three years probation. Atkinson is set for sentencing on May 1, 2013.

Michael Yarbrough and Atkinson were convicted of one count of unlawful manufacturing of firearms between Jan. 1, 2011, and July 2012. Michael Yarbrough also pleaded guilty to one count of transferring firearms knowing that a felony was to be committed. Ashley Yarbrough entered a plea of guilty to one count of making a materially false statement to federal agents regarding the gun activity going on at her residence.

This investigation began on Aug. 15, 2011, with the discovery of an AK-47 manufacturing

business at a residence during the execution of an arrest warrant by United States Marshals in Corpus Christi. At that time, deputies encountered several individuals employed by Michael Yarbrough at a Corpus Christi residence. After agents obtained a search warrant, several fully assembled AK-47 firearms were seized along with multiple handguns, gun parts and firearms in various stages of completion. Agents also discovered duffle bags full of fully assembled AK-47 firearms, ammunition magazines and bandoliers. None of the seized firearms had serial numbers and none of the individuals present has a Federal Firearms License.

Agents have also uncovered a great deal of information regarding Michael Yarbrough and the people he employed to build AK-47 firearms for him. Agents discovered Michael Yarbrough sold fully assembled AK-47 firearms with no serial numbers in McAllen, at least 11 of which have been traced in Mexico by the unique tool markings on the firearms and other unique identifiers.

Michael Yarbrough will remain in custody pending transfer to a U.S. Bureau of Prisons facility to be determined in the near future.

The Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force investigation leading to the criminal charges was conducted in Corpus Christi lead by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Corpus Christi Police Department, the Texas Department of Public Safety, the Nueces County Sheriff's Office, the Nueces County Probation Department and the United States Marshals Service. This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Julie K. Hampton.