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## Port St. Lucie man pleads guilty to international firearms trafficking

MIAMI – A Port St. Lucie man pled guilty today to unlawfully exporting firearms, firearms accessories and ammunition from South Florida to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. This is the result of an investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in Miami and Brazil, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, St. Lucie County Sheriff’s Office and a collaborative effort with the Rio de Janeiro Civil Police, the Brazilian Federal Police, the Brazilian Federal Prosecutor’s Office and Brazilian Customs Service.

Frederik Barbieri, 46, of Ft. Pierce Fla., pleaded guilty to one felony count of conspiracy to commit offenses against the United States and one felony count of unlicensed exportation of defense articles.

According to court documents, Barbieri conspired with others to possess firearms with obliterated serial numbers and delivered packages containing those firearms to contract carriers for international shipment without providing notice that the packages contained firearms, firearms accessories and ammunition.

During this period a shipment sent by Barbieri was intercepted in Rio de Janeiro by Brazilian law enforcement and found to contain approximately thirty AR-15 and AK-47 rifles and firearm magazines, all concealed in four 38-gallon Rheem water heaters. The water heaters were hollowed out and loaded with

the contraband, and the serial numbers on each of the firearms had been obliterated. The same day that Brazilian authorities intercepted his shipment, Barbieri called and requested that the freight forwarder destroy the related paperwork.

From May 2013 to May 2017 Barbieri also shipped to Brazil an additional 120 Rheem water heaters, as well as 520 electric motors and 15 air conditioning units using that freight forwarder. These items are all consistent with objects used to conceal the illegal international shipment of firearms and ammunition. Documentation provided by the freight forwarder revealed Barbieri's historical shipments.

In February 2018, federal agents executed a warrant to search a storage unit rented by Barbieri in Vero Beach, Fla. In the storage unit, law enforcement discovered 52 rifles, 49 of which were wrapped for shipment with obliterated serial numbers. In addition, law enforcement discovered dozens of high capacity firearm magazines, over 2,000 rounds of ammunition, and packaging materials. Barbieri was arrested the following day.

According to Brazilian law enforcement it is illegal for civilians to possess firearms in Brazil, AK and AR rifles have a black-market value of approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000. The retail cost of those firearms in the United States is approximately \$700 to \$1,000.

Neither Barbieri, nor any of his coconspirators, obtained a license or written approval from the United States Department of State to export any defense articles. Non-automatic firearms, firearm accessories, and ammunition are articles designated as "defense articles," pursuant to federal regulations.

Barbieri is scheduled to be sentenced on July 19 by United States District Court Judge Federico Moreno. Barbieri is facing a maximum statutory sentence of 25 years in prison.

Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at [flsd.uscourts.gov](http://flsd.uscourts.gov) or on [pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov](http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov).

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