



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
EASTERN DISTRICT *of* ARKANSAS

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Eastern District of Arkansas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Oklahoma Man Pleads Guilty To Trafficking Firearms Parts Through Arkansas to Mexico

Defendant Assembled Illegal Firearms for Mexican Cartels

LITTLE ROCK—An Oklahoma man has pleaded guilty to his role in a conspiracy that resulted in the trafficking of firearms to Mexican cartels as part of “Operation Thor’s Hammer,” an effort to disrupt cartels’ access to firearms. Andrew Scott Pierson, 47, of Jay, Oklahoma, entered his guilty plea today before United States District Judge Brian S. Miller, who will sentence Pierson at a later date.

In May 2017, an Arkansas resident received a shipment of firearm components that had been sent to him for cerakoting, a process in which a polymer-ceramic coating is added to a firearm or its parts to improve durability. The parts were 80% Colt lower receivers, and this individual recognized these firearm parts as counterfeit. He contacted law enforcement. The counterfeit receivers were traced to an organization in Laredo, Texas, which was transporting firearm parts to Pierson in Nuevo Laredo, Mexico. Pierson assembled the parts into functioning automatic weapons for the Cartel Del Noreste (CDN) and Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG).

Pierson self-surrendered at the port of entry to United States authorities on December 10, 2018. Pierson admitted to ordering and receiving firearm parts from the United States and manufacturing automatic weapons in Mexico for the CDN and CJNG cartels. Law enforcement later confirmed cartel firearm availability was impaired following Pierson’s arrest.

On September 3, 2019, a federal grand jury indicted Pierson and seven others for their involvement conspiracies to traffic in counterfeit goods and to violate the Arms Export Control Act. Five codefendants have previously pleaded guilty, and one co-defendant remains a fugitive in Mexico. Today, Pierson pleaded guilty to Count 2 of the Fourth Superseding Indictment, conspiracy to violate the Arms Export Control Act.

"This case is the first successful prosecution in the country of the exportation and manufacturing of Mexican cartel firearms," stated Acting United States Attorney Jonathan D. Ross. "We are proud that this investigation made it more difficult for violent cartels to obtain firearms, and we intend to prosecute any case that will help keep guns out of the hands of these criminal organizations."

"The cooperation among local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies and the government of Mexico is the foundation for combating cross-border firearms trafficking," said Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) New Orleans Field Division Special Agent in Charge Kurt Thielhorn. "ATF works relentlessly to keep guns out of the hands of drug trafficking organizations and their violent associates. Stemming the flow of illegal guns to Mexico remains a high priority for ATF."

"This plea is another significant moment in an investigation highlighting the dangers facing our communities. With numerous accounts of atrocities attributed to cartels, it's unconscionable to think someone would conspire to provide them weapons. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) is proud to have worked with so many fellow law enforcement agencies in helping bring this case to fruition," said Thomas Noyes, Inspector in Charge of the Fort Worth Division. "We will vigorously pursue those who misuse the U.S. Mail, and we thank the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of Arkansas for their commitment in prosecuting these cases."

Pierson's crime is punishable by not more than 20 years imprisonment, a fine of not more than \$1,000,000, and not more than three years supervised release. The case was investigated by ATF and USPIS with assistance from Homeland Security Investigations. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Anne Gardner.

This effort is part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF) operation. OCDETF identifies, disrupts, and dismantles the highest-level criminal organizations that threaten the United States using a prosecutor-led, intelligence-driven, multi-agency approach. Additional information about the OCDETF Program can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/OCDETF>.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, is available online at

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