



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of Indiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, February 5, 2018

Pennsylvania Firearms Dealer Sentenced To 100 Months Imprisonment

HAMMOND - The United States Attorney for the Northern District of Indiana, Thomas L. Kirsch II, announced that Vahan Kelerchian, 58, of Richboro, Pennsylvania, doing business as Armament Services International "ASI", was sentenced before Senior District Court Judge Joseph S. Van Bokkelen for his role in the acquisition of machineguns and restricted laser aiming sights.

Kelerchian was sentenced to 100 months imprisonment, ordered to pay a \$100,000 fine and \$28,200 in restitution along with serving 1 year of supervised release upon release from prison. Kelerchian was found guilty after a two-week trial that ended October 15, 2016. Kelerchian was taken into custody upon sentencing to begin serving his sentence.

According to evidence presented at trial, Kelerchian conspired with Joseph Kumstar and Ronald Slusser, now former Lake County Police Officers, to knowingly make false statements relating to the acquisition of firearms. Kumstar and Slusser, who have plead guilty, used their positions as sworn law enforcement officers in coordination with Kelerchian using his position as a Class 3 Federal Firearms Licensee to acquire approximately 71 fully automatic machineguns in the name of the Lake County Sheriff's Department knowing that the Lake County Sheriff's Department was not going to be the true owner of these weapons. Kelerchian, Kumstar and Slusser conspired to use law enforcement letter head to create letters which falsely represented that the machineguns were going to be used by the Lake County Sheriff's Department to carry out its law enforcement responsibilities since machineguns manufactured after 1986 can only be acquired by law enforcement agencies and not individual officers. The machineguns were purchased for a cost of \$1200 and \$1600 and then when received by the Sheriff's Department, transported offsite to be parted out. The barrels (also known as the "upper") were split with the officers and some were sent back to Kelerchian. The "uppers" sold between \$3000 and \$3600 due to post-1986 parts not being available to the public because only law enforcement agencies or the military can acquire these weapons.

Kelerchian also used his company (Armament Services International "ASI") to assist Kumstar and Slusser to acquire 74 restricted laser aiming sights again using law enforcement letterhead from the Lake County Sheriff's Department and the Lowell Police Department. These class 3b laser sights were restricted by the Food and Drug Administration. These lasers were designed, per a variance from FDA, to be used for law enforcement and military use only because they did not have the audible or manual safety locks as required for class 3b lasers. The laser aiming sights had a visible laser that could be seen in excess of 50 feet and an invisible laser that could be used for targeting with infrared goggles in excess of 1 mile. Kelerchian along with the officers used their positions to acquire these devices and sell them to the general public or keep the devices for themselves.

In addition to the charges above, Kelerchian was also found guilty of money laundering and false statements to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives regarding false demonstration letters involving high powered belt-fed machine guns. Kelerchian was also charged with bribery but was acquitted of that charge.

United States Attorney Thomas L. Kirsch II said, " Mr. Kelerchian abused the authority entrusted to him for criminal purposes. The 8 years that he will spend in federal prison, which began today, should be a deterrent to others similarly situated that act for illegal purposes. The U.S. Attorney's Office will continue to aggressively prosecute our nation's firearm laws and seek meaningful sentences of offenders to both punish and deter this type of criminal behavior.

As reported previously, Joseph Kumstar was sentenced to 57 months; Edward Kabella was sentenced to 24 months; and Ronald Slusser was sentenced to 70 months for their involvement in this case.

This case is a result of an investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Department of Defense Criminal Investigative Services; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Food and Drug Administration, Office of Criminal Investigations; and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division. This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Philip C. Benson and Thomas M. McGrath.

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Topic(s):

Firearms Offenses

Public Corruption

Component(s):

USAO - Indiana, Northern

Updated February 5, 2018