

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Eastern District of North Carolina

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Former Soldier Sentenced on Firearm Offense

RALEIGH – United States Attorney Robert J. Higdon, Jr. announced that today in federal court, Senior United States District Judge W. Earl Britt sentenced **JOSEPH RUSSEL GRAFF**, 39, of Newport, North Carolina to 52 months imprisonment, followed by 3 years of supervised release.

“The success of our overseas war and reconstruction efforts is tied directly to the trust and respect established with the local populace,” said U.S. Attorney Higdon. “Corruption in our military operations undermines those efforts and cannot be tolerated.”

GRAFF was named in a Superseding Indictment filed on April 10, 2018 charging him with several offenses, including his unlawful possession of machineguns. On November 19, 2018, **GRAFF** pled guilty to that firearm offense.

According to Superseding Indictment and information in the public record, **GRAFF** was a Sergeant First Class (E-7) in the United States Department of the Army assigned to the 1st Battalion, 3rd Special Forces Group, based at Fort Bragg. **GRAFF** was a Special Forces Operator assigned to Operational Detachment - Bravo (“ODB”). His military occupational specialty was a weapons sergeant.

During a search of his residence in North Carolina, law enforcement recovered 8 firearms, six of which were machineguns. **GRAFF** told law enforcement that he brought the weapons back from Afghanistan, but falsely claimed that he had cleared all the firearms through his Command and U.S. Customs. **GRAFF** did not have any permits to possess any National Firearms Act (NFA) firearms. **GRAFF** never obtained a permit to import weapons.

During the ensuing investigation, law enforcement also uncovered evidence that **GRAFF** participated in a scheme to steal government property and have it sold on the black market by Afghan nationals. **GRAFF** sent the money from the scheme back to the United States in a storage container. **GRAFF** then used the money to make a down payment on a new home, install an indoor pool, and to buy vehicles for himself and his family. **GRAFF** agreed to the forfeiture of \$151,906.11 in connection with the fraud.

“This sentencing is the product of a thorough investigation and demonstrates the effectiveness of joint investigations by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) and our law enforcement partners,” said Special Agent in Charge Robert E. Craig, Jr., DCIS Mid-Atlantic Field Office. “DCIS will continue to

vigorously pursue corrupt actors whose actions subvert the mission of our brave service members putting their lives on the line each day.”

“This crime involves a serious breach of trust,” said Inspector General John F. Sopko. “SIGAR investigators will tirelessly pursue any crimes involving the abuse of the public trust and misuse of American taxpayer dollars in Afghanistan.”

“Today’s sentencing is a clear example that illegal actions such as this will not be tolerated,” said Frank Robey, director of the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command’s Major Procurement Fraud Unit. “Our special agents, who are strategically stationed throughout the world, will continue to aggressively investigate criminal allegations that ultimately affect the readiness of our Army.”

Investigation of this case was conducted by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command - Major Procurement Fraud Unit, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Senior Litigation Counsel Banumathi Rangarajan handled the prosecution on behalf of the United States Attorney for the Eastern District of North Carolina.

Topic(s):

Project Safe Neighborhoods

Component(s):

USAO - North Carolina, Eastern

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