



LYNNE ABRAHAM
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
THREE SOUTH PENN SQUARE
CORNER OF JUNIPER AND SOUTH
PENN
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107**

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Cathie Abookire / 215-686-8711
Director of Communications

GUN VIOLENCE TASK FORCE TARGETS PHILADELPHIA GUN CRIME STRAW PURCHASERS

Task Force Pursues "Last Straw"

In December, with funding from the State Legislature, District Attorney Lynne Abraham and Attorney General Tom Corbett launched a Gun Violence Task Force to attack the proliferation of illegal guns on city streets. Composed of veteran investigators and seasoned prosecutors, and working in close coordination with the Philadelphia Police Department, the Task Force began operations in Southwest Philadelphia and has since expanded into the city's East and Northwest Divisions. Still only partially staffed, the Task Force has opened more than 70 investigations, already made six arrests and seized more than fifty firearms including two AK-47's.

Today, Abraham and Corbett announced that the Task Force has obtained arrest warrants for 14 individuals involved in numerous "Straw Purchasing" schemes to illegally buy guns for criminals. Under state law, a convicted felon is prohibited from purchasing a firearm. Consequently, felons hire "Straws", citizens with no criminal record, to purchase guns for them. The "Straw", after buying the gun and delivering it to the felon, often reports the gun as stolen in an attempt to avoid liability when the gun is later used in a crime.

Arrest warrants have been issued for the following:

Michael Mattox, 30, of the 2300 block of Glenwood Street. Mattox is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in connection with a firearms purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (10 counts); 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree (10 counts); 18

PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (10 counts); and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree (1 count);

Kyi Brown, 34, of the 100 block of Duval Street. Brown is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (1), Transfer of a Firearm in Violation of Law, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (5 counts); 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree (5 counts); and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree (1 count).

Andre Trower, 28, of the 4500 block of North 20th Street. Trower is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in connection with a firearms purchase, a Felony of the 3rd degree (4 counts); 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree (4 counts); 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (4 counts); and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree (1 count);

Joanne Ricciardi-Clementi, 33, of the 7300 block of Brentwood Road. Ricciardi-Clementi is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (1), Transfer of a Firearm in Violation of Law, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S.A. 4906, False Reports to Law Enforcement, a Misdemeanor of the 3rd degree (1 count); and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree (1 count).

Lloyd Miner, 27, of the 5600 block of North Second Street. Miner is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in connection with a firearms purchase, a Felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree

Latanya Parker, 22, of the 5600 block of North Second Street; Parker is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in connection with a firearms purchase, a Felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Tranea White, 21, of the 300 block of Congress Avenue. White is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in connection with a firearms purchase, a Felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Cynthia Chilsom, 24, of the 5700 block of Baltimore Avenue. Chilsom is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (1), Transfer of a Firearm in Violation of Law, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a misdemeanor of the first degree; 18

PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4906, False Reports to Law Enforcement, a misdemeanor of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Rashan Adderly, 21, of the 6300 block of Norwood Street. Adderly is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (1), Transfer of a Firearm in Violation of Law, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Twanita Johnson, 21, of the 5500 block of Marshall Street. Johnson is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (1), Transfer of a Firearm in Violation of Law, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Christine Leach, 34, of the 300 block of East Godfrey Avenue. Leach is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in connection with a firearms purchase, a Felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Jose Manuel Diaz, 34, of the 300 block of East Godfrey Avenue. Diaz is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in connection with a firearms purchase, a Felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Natia Giles, 23, of the 5900 block of North 4th Street. Giles is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (1), Transfer of a Firearm in Violation of Law, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4906, False Reports to Law Enforcement, a Misdemeanor of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Stephen Blackshear, 21, of the 7900 block of Williams Avenue. Blackshear is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111(g) (1), Transfer of a Firearm in Violation of Law, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a Misdemeanor of the first degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4906, False Reports to Law Enforcement, a Misdemeanor of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Arrested are:

Michael Westcott, 23, of the 100 block of Horter Street. Westcott was arrested on 12/29/06 and charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6105, Person not to possess firearms, a felony of the second degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111, Illegal transfer of firearms, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4906, False Reports to Law Enforcement, a Misdemeanor of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree. Westcott has been held for court on all charges and is listed for trial on 6/8/07 in Gun Court, Courtroom 505 of the CJC.

Kenneth Goodman, 21, of the 2800 block of South 82nd street. Goodman was arrested on 12/29/06 and charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6111, Illegal transfer of firearms, a misdemeanor of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a Misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S.A. 4906, False Reports to Law Enforcement, a Misdemeanor of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree. Goodman has been held for court on all charges and is listed for trial on 4/24/07 in Gun Court, Courtroom 505, CJC.

Kevin Simms, 43, of the 2200 block of East Monmouth Street. Simms was arrested on 4/5/07 and charged with violating 18 PA.C.S.A. 6105, Person not to possess firearms, a felony of the second degree; and 18 PA.C.S.A. 908, Prohibited Offensive Weapon, a misdemeanor of the first degree. Simms is listed for status of preliminary hearing on 4/11/07 in Courtroom 1003, CJC.

Felonies of the 3rd degree are punishable by up to 7 years imprisonment and a \$15,000 fine. Misdemeanors of the 1st degree are punishable by up to 5 years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. Misdemeanors of the 2nd degree are punishable by up to 2 years imprisonment and a \$5,000 fine. Misdemeanors of the 3rd degree are punishable by up to 1 year imprisonment and a \$2,500 fine.

“Our citizens must realize that not only can a ‘Straw Purchaser’ be charged with illegally buying the gun for the felon; in certain circumstances, they may also be held criminally as well as civilly liable for crimes subsequently committed with that gun” said Abraham. “Our hope is that by publicizing these arrests, we can deter otherwise law-abiding citizens from engaging in this deadly scheme.”

Per Corbett, “Straws are often citizens who have no prior criminal record. It is not only foolish, but dangerous for them to get caught up in the world of gun trafficking. We are following up on all reports of stolen guns. Our goal is to someday see the “last straw” purchase made.

"The Philadelphia Police Department is committed to working with the District Attorney's Office and the Attorney General's Office to eliminate illegal guns from our streets," said Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson.

The magnitude of the city's gun trafficking problem is staggering. In 2005, 4,902 firearms were recovered by Police in Philadelphia. Yet in 2006, there were still 2,004 shootings on city streets.

