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NEWS RELEASE

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GUN VIOLENCE TASK FORCE TARGETS PHILADELPHIA GUN CRIME

***GUN VIOLENCE TASK FORCE SEIZES ILLEGAL GUNS USED IN VIOLENT
CRIMES AND PROSECUTES ILLEGAL GUN DEALERS***

WHAT: NEWS CONFERENCE

WHEN: THURSDAY AUGUST 16, 2007
1PM

WHERE: FORENSIC SCIENCE CENTER
843 N. 8th (8TH AND POPLAR)
CONFERENCE ROOM

PARTICIPANTS: District Attorney Lynne Abraham
Attorney General Tom Corbett
State Sen. Vincent Fumo
Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson

August 16, 2007----District Attorney Lynne Abraham, Attorney General Tom Corbett and Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson today announced that the Gun Violence Task Force has obtained arrest warrants for 17 more individuals involved in "Straw Purchasing" and other schemes to illegally traffic guns in Philadelphia. Over the past eight months, the Task Force has opened 238 investigations, made 44 arrests and seized 100 firearms including three AK-47s.

In December 2006, with funding from the State Legislature and spearheaded by State Sen. Vincent Fumo, District Attorney Lynne Abraham and Attorney General Tom Corbett launched the 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 five of the city's six police Divisions. With the assistance of this same state funding, the Philadelphia Police Department has begun to expand the number of trained Firearms Examiners and to modernize its Firearms Identification Unit facilities located at 843-845 North 8th Street. The funding has not only allowed the Department to purchase much needed equipment, but also to institute 6-month, 12-month, and 18-month training programs which when completed next summer, will more than quadruple the number of fully qualified examiners available to investigate firearms offenses in our city.

“Not only can a ‘Straw Purchaser’ be charged with illegally buying the gun for the felon. In certain circumstances, a ‘Straw Purchaser’ may also be held criminally as well as civilly liable for crimes subsequently committed with that gun” said Abraham. “We are committed to prevent people engaging in this deadly scheme, and we will prosecute to the fullest extent of the law.”

“The message that we are sending with these arrests is clear: we are aggressively investigating and prosecuting straw purchasers, and we are committed to stemming the tide of gun violence in Philadelphia,” said Corbett.

"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. "This cooperative effort is extremely crucial to getting illegal guns off the streets of Philadelphia."

"I believe that over the long haul, one of our most effective strategies against gun violence is to keep weapons out of the hands of criminals and prosecute the dealers who supply them illegally," said Fumo. "I commend Attorney General Corbett, District Attorney Abraham and the Police Department for the work they have done so far. We are off to a good start."

The magnitude of the city's gun trafficking problem is staggering:

- In 2006, police recovered 5400 guns in Philadelphia.
- Yet in 2006, 2004 people were shot on city streets.

- In 2007 to date, police have recovered 3000 guns.
- In 2007 to date, 1107 people have been shot.

Under Pennsylvania law, a convicted felon is prohibited from purchasing a firearm. Sometimes, a felon may use fake identification to try to purchase a weapon. Most often, 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, frequently reports the gun as stolen in an attempt to avoid criminal responsibility when the gun is later used in a crime. Guns taken in residential burglaries are yet another source of crime guns. And some guns, legitimately purchased, are directly sold by their owners to felons for money or drugs. Today's warrants charge the illegal trafficking of 51 handguns and one machine gun pursuant to these various schemes.

Arrest warrants have been issued for the following:

Michael Roberts, 28, of the 5700 block of Hazel Avenue. It is alleged that from February of 2004 through March of 2007, Roberts acted as a straw purchaser of 7 firearms. On 2/27/04, Roberts purchased a .40 caliber handgun which was recovered by police on the highway on 3/25/05. On 3/15/2005, Roberts purchased a 9mm handgun which was recovered by police from a male named Kirkland Thompson on 5/13/06. On 3/24/07, Roberts purchased a 40 caliber handgun which has not yet been recovered. On 5/5/2005, Roberts purchased another 40 caliber handgun and a 9mm handgun. The 40 caliber handgun was recovered by police on 5/29/05 from a male named Nasir White who is presently wanted for an unrelated murder. The 9mm has not been recovered. On 7/13/05, Roberts purchased a .45 caliber handgun which was recovered by police on 1/18/06 from a male named Mark Stevenson. On 8/19/05, Roberts purchased two 45 caliber handguns. One of the guns was recovered by police on 6/26/07 at 6000 "A" street, the scene of a shooting where 4 victims were shot, one of whom died. The second has not yet been recovered. On 8/21/05, Roberts falsely reported to police that 7 of the handguns he had purchased had been stolen on that date. On 3/12/07, Roberts purchased another 40 caliber handgun which has not yet been recovered. Roberts is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111, False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (7 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4911, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the third degree (7 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (7 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4906, False Reports to Law Enforcement Authorities, a misdemeanor of the third degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Dontay Hughes, 20, of the 4500 block of N 20th street. Hughes is accused of paying a straw purchaser \$50 on each of 4 occasions from January through July 2005 to purchase a total of 4 handguns for Hughes. Hughes is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111 (g)(4), False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (4 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (4 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (4 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4906, False Reports to Law Enforcement, a misdemeanor of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Venita Taylor, 36, of the 2200 block of N. Colorado Street. Taylor is accused of straw purchasing 3 handguns - two 9mm handguns and one 45 caliber handgun for a convicted felon on 11/14/06. Police recently recovered one of the 9mm handguns along with narcotics from another male on 7/15/07 in the area of 2400 N. 4th street. Taylor is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (3 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Juan Fargas, 24, of the 2900 block of N. Rosehill Street. Fargas, who has a prior conviction in New York on drug charges, is accused of falsifying forms in an attempt to purchase a 40 caliber handgun from a Philadelphia gun store on 4/4/07. Fargas is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a), Tampering with

Public Records or Information, a felony of the third degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree.

Jameel Jordan, 26, of the 1900 block of Fawn Street. It is alleged that Jordan, who is on parole for Robbery, offered to pay for a handgun for a straw purchaser if she purchased two guns and gave him one. On 1/4/07, the straw purchased two handguns – a 9mm and a 40 caliber. Jordan reneged on the deal and kept both. The 40 caliber handgun was recovered by police on 1/9/07. The 9mm handgun was recovered on 2/12/07. Both had obliterated serial numbers. Jordan is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6105 Person not to Possess Firearm, a felony of the second degree; 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a Felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the third degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (2 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Rodney Hargust, 43, of the 100 block of East Meehan Street. It is alleged that on 4 occasions, the last of which occurred on 4/17/07, Hargust traded handguns for drugs. One of the handguns was recovered in connection with a car jacking on 5/14/06. Hargust is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111, Illegal Transfer of a Firearm, a felony of the 3rd degree (4 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 6115, a misdemeanor of the 1st degree (4 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree (4 counts).

Nina Marshall, 25, of the 2000 block of West Spencer Street. It is alleged that in December, 2003, Marshall purchased a 45 caliber handgun from a gun shop for a friend of her boyfriend. On 4/26/2007, the gun was used in attempted robbery in which the victim gained control of the weapon and shot the robber to death. Marshall is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Yasmeen Pringle, 27, of the 2400 block of North Hollywood Street. It is alleged that Pringle purchased three handguns, two for her brother and another for her stepbrother (a High Point 9mm), both of whom were unable to purchase the guns themselves due to their criminal records. Her stepbrother, Corey Scott, was arrested less than four months after the purchase in possession of a High Point 9mm with an obliterated serial number. Pringle is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (3 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts).

Leander Pierce, 32, of the 1200 block of Dover Street. It is alleged that Pierce illegally bought and then resold a fully automatic 9mm sub-machine gun and 3 magazines on 7/24/07. Pierce is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6105, Person not to Possess a Firearm (F2); 18 PA.C.S. 6111, Illegal Transfer of a Firearm, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 908, Prohibited Offensive Weapon, a misdemeanor of the 1st degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 2nd degree (2 counts).

Lashea Whiting, 21, of the 7000 block of Rutland Street. It is alleged that on 4/21/07 Whiting purchased a 45 caliber handgun for her child's father, a convicted felon. On 6/7/07, she falsely reported the firearm stolen from her residence when she learned that her child's father may have used the handgun to shoot his brother. Whiting is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4906, False Reports to Law Enforcement, a misdemeanor of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Shareef Ford, 32, of the 5300 block of Marvine Street. It is alleged that on 4/27/07, Ford was arrested by Philadelphia Police in possession of a 45 caliber handgun. Follow-up investigation by the Gun Violence Task Force revealed that Ford purchased the 45 caliber handgun at a gun show on 4/1/07 using false identification. On 4/20/07, again using false identification, Ford purchased a 40 caliber handgun from a gun shop. Ford is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (4), False Statements in connection with a firearms purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4104, Tampering with Records or Identification, a misdemeanor of the 1st degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4120, Identity Theft, a misdemeanor of the 1st degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4101, Forgery, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 6105, Person Not to Possess Firearm, a felony of the 2nd degree.

James Morgenstern, 22, of the unit block of Roboda Boulevard, Royersford, PA and **Kenneth Gatlin**, 22, of the unit block of Mill Lane, Limerick, PA. It is alleged that Gatlin and Morgenstern are members of a burglary ring that committed at least 17 burglaries in Montgomery County in which dozens of handguns and rifles were stolen. Many of the guns stolen in the burglaries were later sold on the streets of Philadelphia. Both are charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 3925, Theft Receiving Stolen Property, a felony of the 2nd degree (15 counts); 6111 Illegal Transfer of a Firearm, a felony of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 6105, Person not to Possess Firearm, a felony of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 6106, Firearms Not to be Carried Without a License, a felony of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 2nd degree.

Gregorio Rodriguez, 24, of the 3000 block of Amber Street. It is alleged that Rodriguez, convicted for arson in 2004 and again in 2005 for illegal gun possession, used a straw purchaser to obtain 3 more handguns at gun shows - two 9MM handguns and one 40 caliber handgun. Two days later, Rodriguez was arrested on the street by Philadelphia police for robbery and found to be in possession of one of the 9MM handguns loaded with six live rounds. Rodriguez is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6105 Person not to Possess Firearm, a felony of the 2nd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 6111, Illegal Transfer of a Firearm, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 6106, Firearm not to be Carried Without A License, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 6108, Carrying a Firearm on a Public Street, a misdemeanor of the 1st degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (3 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts).

Khayree Lewis, 30, of the 1600 block of S. 22nd Street. It is alleged that Lewis purchased and then illegally resold two handguns. The first handgun, a 40 caliber Glock was illegally sold to Dane Savage who was shot and killed on 8/12/2002. The second handgun, a 45 caliber Glock, was recovered by Philadelphia Police during the arrest of three males for narcotics charges on 10/12/2006. A third handgun purchased by Lewis was recovered by police after a shooting on 2/28/2005. A fourth handgun purchased by Lewis was recovered by police after a robbery and shooting on 12/26/2006. Lewis is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111(c), Transfer of a Firearm in Violation of Law, a felony of the second degree (2 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 2nd degree (2 counts).

Kiua Golden, 27, of the 1800 block of West Tioga Street. It is alleged that on 3/9/07, Golden purchased a 9 mm handgun for her brother, Norman Mathis who was unable to buy a firearm because of prior felony convictions. The next day Golden attempted to buy Mathis a second gun, but the gun store refused the sale. Golden and her brother then went to a different gun store where she purchased him a .380 caliber handgun. On 6/20/07, Mathis was arrested for attempted murder in connection with a shooting that occurred on 6/6/07 in the 5200 block of Heston Street. At the time of his arrest, Mathis was in possession of the .380 caliber handgun purchased by Golden. Golden is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 2nd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (2), Transfer of a Firearm to an Ineligible Person, a felony of the 2nd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (2 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 2nd degree (2 counts).

Regina Shackford, 31, of the 2700 block of Newkirk Street. It is alleged that on 4/20/07, Shackford purchased a .40 caliber handgun for her boyfriend, Earl Williams. The Task Force was able to recover that gun on 4/25/07; but a week later, Williams was arrested by police in the 2700 block of Newkirk Street in illegal possession of another handgun. Shackford is charged with violation of 18 PA.C.S. 6111(g) (4) False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911(a) (1), Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree.

In addition to the above trafficking warrants, the Task Force on Monday, assisting East Detective Division in the investigation of a shooting which occurred on 7/21/07 in the area of 400 East Clearfield Street, charged **Charles Wheeler**, 21, of the 2100 block of East Birch Street with Attempted Murder, Aggravated Assault, Weapons Offenses, and Conspiracy.

On Tuesday, Task Force Agents working with Southwest Detective Division assisted in the arrest of **Michael Bey**, 24, of the 400 block of Holden street. Bey was charged with the gunpoint robbery of two people the day before in the 4400 block of Market street. At the time of his arrest, Bey was wanted for the gunpoint robbery of three people at 4400 Haverford Avenue committed in October of 2006.

Felonies of the 2nd degree are punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment and a \$25,000 fine.

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. Conviction of more than one count of 18 PA.C.S.A 6111 is a Felony of the 2nd degree and carries a **mandatory** sentence of five to 10 years imprisonment and a \$25,000 fine.