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NEWS RELEASE

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17 New Arrests by Gun Violence Task Force Target Convicted Felons and Straws

District Attorney Lynne Abraham, Attorney General Tom Corbett and Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson today announced that the Gun Violence Task Force has arrested 17 more individuals involved in the illegal purchase and trafficking of handguns in Philadelphia. Over the past ten months, the Task Force has opened over 350 investigations, made 97 arrests involving the illegal sale of firearms, and seized 168 firearms including 7 AK-47's. In addition, the Task Force has assisted Philadelphia police in solving numerous shootings and at least one homicide.

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 all six of the city's police Divisions.

"We are attacking the illegal gun trade at the root," said District Attorney Lynne Abraham. "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. We are committed to prevent people engaging in this deadly scheme, and we will prosecute to the fullest extent of the law."

"These arrests are further proof that the Gun Violence Task Force is making progress in stemming gun violence. The message that a straw purchase of a gun is a crime is being heard," said Corbett.

"The Philadelphia Police Department is committed to continue to work 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."

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

- In 2006, police recovered 5,400 guns in Philadelphia.
- Yet in 2006, 2,004 people were shot on city streets.
- In 2007 to date, police have recovered 4,000 more guns.
- In 2007 to date, 1,520 people have been shot.

Under Pennsylvania law, a convicted felon is prohibited from purchasing a firearm. Felons often use false identification to attempt to purchase weapons. They also 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.

The following individuals have been arrested:

Ilene McCray, 23, of the 5600 block of Appletree Street. It is alleged that McCray, a convicted felon, falsified purchase forms in an attempt to buy a .45 caliber handgun. McCray is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111, False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911, 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.

Christopher Simpson, 31, of the 3000 block of Holland Street, Bronx, NY; **Lanay Harold**, 21, of the 800 block of Carver Street; and **Kaine Wright** of the block of N 23rd Street. It is alleged that Simpson, a New York resident, asked Wright to purchase an AK47 rifle for him. Wright, a convicted felon, could not purchase the weapon; so she hired Harold to buy it. GVTF agents arrested Simpson with the AK47 shortly after the sale. All three are charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111, False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Edward Lee, 38, of the 3400 block of N. Helen Street. Lee, a convicted felon, was arrested by police on 10/10/07 in possession of a 9mm handgun which was straw purchased for him on 2/14/07 by Cynthia Chilsom and Tranea White, both previously arrested by the GVTF. Lee is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111, False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree.

Muhammed Bentley, 23, homeless; **Riheem Wilson**, 26, of the 3200 block of D Street; and **Dwayne Wilson**, 20, of the 800 block of Markoe Street. It is alleged that on 10/20/07, Bentley and Dwayne Wilson straw purchased a .45 caliber handgun for Riheem Wilson, a convicted felon. It is further alleged that Bentley and Dwayne Wilson also

straw purchased a 9mm handgun on 8/22/07 for another convicted felon. All are charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111 False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the third 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.

Nicole Jackson, 36, of the 6500 block of Dicks Avenue. It is alleged that Jackson, a convicted felon, purchased a .40 caliber handgun using fraudulent identification. Jackson is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111, 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, 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. 4120, Identity Theft, a felony of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 4101, Forgery, a felony of the 2nd degree.

Shamarr Myers, 24, of the 5400 block of Westford Road. It is alleged that Myers straw purchased two 9mm handguns at a gun show. The first 9mm was recovered 3 days later when police arrested Collins Eubank, a convicted felon, for carrying the weapon. The second 9mm was recovered on 10/11/07 when police arrested Tyreek Moore, another convicted felon, for carrying that weapon. Myers is charged with violations of 18 PA.C.S. 6111, False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (2 counts).

Elgin Woods, 31, of the 1900 block of Chelton Avenue. It is alleged that Woods using false identification, purchased 2 handguns and a shotgun. One of the handguns was recovered by police when they arrested Angel Sanchez, a convicted felon, for aggravated assault. Woods is charged with violations of 18 PA.C.S. 6111, False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (3 counts).

Howard Jeffers, 56, of the 2000 block of S. 57th Street. It is alleged that Jeffers straw purchased 2 handguns, one .40 caliber and one 9mm, for his girlfriend's nephew. The 9mm was recovered by police from Rasheen Mears on 10/3/07 when police responded to a report of gunshots in the 6500 block of Upland Street. On 5/11/07, Jeffers purchased another .40 caliber handgun for a friend of his girlfriend's daughter, Jordan Bradshaw. Jeffers is charged with violations of 18 PA.C.S. 6111, False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (3 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (3 counts).

Billy Le aka William Hlushmanuk, 30, of the 7600 block of Leonard Street. It is alleged that Le, a convicted felon, falsified application forms in an attempt to purchase a .40 caliber handgun. Le is charged with violations of 18 PA.C.S. 6111, False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree.

Mikkel McKinnie, 28, of the 6300 block of Langdon Street. It is alleged that McKinnie, a convicted felon, used false identification to purchase a .40 caliber handgun. McKinnie is charged with violations of 18 PA.C.S. 6111, False Statements in Connection with a Firearms Purchase, a felony of the 3rd degree; 18 PA.C.S. 4911, 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. 4120, Identity Theft, a felony of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 4101, Forgery, a felony of the 2nd degree.

Shandia Roberts, 29, of the 5600 block of Ogontz Avenue. It is alleged that Roberts straw purchased a 9mm handgun for her boyfriend, Cody Bowden . The 9mm was recovered by police when a Search Warrant was executed at Bowden's residence. Roberts is charged with violations of 18 PA.C.S. 6111, 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, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree; and 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree.

Joseph Stepnowski, 31, of the 100 block of Saude Avenue, Essington PA. It is alleged that Stepnowski illegally sold two .40 caliber handguns. The first was recovered by police from a convicted felon, Joshua Garcia. The second was recovered by police after being used in a shooting in the 3400 block of Tulip Street. Stepnowski is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111, Illegal Sale or Transfer of a Firearm, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 903, Conspiracy, a felony of the 3rd degree (2 counts).

Isheen Johnson, 30, of the 2000 block of S. Salford Street. It is alleged that Johnson used false identification to purchase 5 handguns. One of the handguns was recovered by police from a convicted felon in the 5200 block of Baltimore Avenue. Another was recovered during an arrest in the 5500 block of Angora Terrace. Johnson's arrest was the result of a collaborative effort between the Task Force and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. Johnson is charged with violating 18 PA.C.S. 6111, Illegal Sale or Transfer of a Firearm, a felony of the 3rd degree (5 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4911, Tampering with Public Records or Information, a felony of the 3rd degree (5 counts); 18 PA.C.S. 4904, Unsworn Falsification, a misdemeanor of the 2nd degree (5 counts); and 18 PA.C.S. 6105, Person not to Possess Firearms, a felony of the 2nd degree (5 counts).

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.