



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

**TODD P. GRAVES**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **FIVE INDICTED FOR VIOLATING FEDERAL FIREARMS LAW**

**SPRINGFIELD, Mo.** – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that five defendants were indicted by a federal grand jury today in separate and unrelated cases of violating federal firearms law.

\* **Jesse P. Blankenship**, 19, of Marshfield, Mo., was charged in a two-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury meeting in Springfield.

Count One of the federal indictment alleges that **Blankenship** was in possession of a Winchester 12 gauge shotgun on April 26, 2003. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for anyone convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Blankenship** has a 2002 criminal felony conviction for property damage in Webster County, Mo.

Count Two of the federal indictment alleges that the shotgun alleged in Count One was modified in violation of federal law. According to the indictment, **Blankenship** was in possession of short-barreled shotgun with a barrel length of 13 inches and an overall length of 25 3/4 inches. Under federal law, Graves explained, a shotgun may not be modified with a barrel less than 18 inches and an overall length less than 26 inches.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Douglas D. Gaston. It was investigated by the Webster County Sheriff's Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

\* **Stephen L. Salyer**, 46, of Jerico Springs, Mo., was charged with being a felon in possession of firearms in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury meeting in Springfield.

Today's indictment alleges that **Salyer** was in possession of a Savage .22 caliber/.410 gauge shotgun/rifle combination, and a Jennings .22 caliber pistol. Under federal law, Graves

explained, it is illegal for anyone convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Salyer** has a 1993 criminal felony conviction for possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute in Cedar County, Mo.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Douglas D. Gaston. It was investigated by COMET (the Combined Ozarks Multi-jurisdictional Enforcement Team) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

\* **James W. Bell**, 36, of Springfield, Mo., was charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury meeting in Springfield.

Today's indictment alleges that **Bell** was in possession of a Davis Industries .22 caliber derringer on April 25, 2003 in Greene County. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for anyone convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Bell** has a 1986 criminal felony conviction for robbery in Mississippi County, Ark.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney James J. Kelleher. It was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Springfield, Mo., Police Department.

\* **Bob A. M. Houston**, 20, of Springfield, Mo., was charged in a three-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury meeting in Springfield.

Count One of the federal indictment alleges that **Houston** was an addict and an unlawful user of marijuana who was in possession of a Survival Arms .22 caliber rifle on March 26, 2003, in Greene County, Mo. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for anyone who is a unlawful user of a controlled substance to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition.

Count Two of the federal indictment alleges that **Houston** was in possession of the firearm alleged in Count One after being charged with a felony crime. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any defendant charged with a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Houston** has been charged with two criminal felony convictions for assault and unlawful use of a weapon in Greene County.

Count Three of the federal indictment alleges that the rifle alleged in Count One was modified in violation of federal law. According to the indictment, **Houston** was in possession of firearm with an overall length of 24 1/4 inches. Under federal law, Graves explained, a firearm may not be modified with an overall length less than 26 inches.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney J. Daniel Patterson. It was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Springfield, Mo., Police Department.

\* **Carol L. Wiles, Sr.**, 52, of Bois D'Arc, Mo., was charged with being a felon in possession of firearms in a superseding indictment returned by a federal grand jury meeting in

Springfield.

Today's superseding indictment, Graves explained, replaces an indictment returned on April 4, 2003. That indictment charged **Wiles** with being in possession of six firearms, including three shotguns, a rifle and two handguns. Today's indictment adds two revolvers to the charges contained in the indictment. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for anyone convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Wiles** has eight criminal felony convictions in Greene County, including three 1988 criminal felony convictions for burglary, a 1974 criminal felony conviction for stealing, a 1973 criminal felony conviction for car tampering, a 1973 criminal felony conviction for assault, and 1968 criminal felony convictions for burglary and stealing.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney J. Daniel Patterson. It was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and COMET (the Combined Ozarks Multi-jurisdictional Enforcement Team).

Graves cautioned that the charges contained in the indictments are simply accusations, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charges must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at  
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