



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

THREE PLEAD GUILTY TO VIOLATING FEDERAL FIREARMS LAWS

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that three defendants pleaded guilty in federal court today, in separate and unrelated cases, to violating federal firearms laws.

* **Robert G. Gates**, 52, of Purdy, Mo., pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr this morning to being a felon in possession of a firearm.

By pleading guilty, **Gates** admitted that he was in possession of 12 rifles and two shotguns on May 12, 2003, in Barry County, Mo. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for anyone convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Gates** has 1971 criminal felony convictions for theft by deception and passing a worthless check in McPherson County, Kan., a 1976 criminal felony conviction for stealing in Newton County, Mo., a 1981 criminal felony conviction for stealing in Newton County, and 1997 criminal felony convictions for first degree statutory rape and second degree statutory rape in Barry County.

Gates was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on July 9, 2003, in Springfield.

By pleading guilty, **Gates** may be subject to a sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine of up to \$250,000. His sentence will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. A sentencing hearing will be determined after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Doug Bunch. It was investigated by the Barry County, Mo., Sheriff's Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

* **Jesse P. Blankenship**, 19, of Marshfield, Mo., pleaded guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge James C. England this afternoon to being a felon in possession of a firearm.

By pleading guilty, **Blankenship** admitted that he was in possession of a Winchester 12 gauge shotgun on April 26, 2003. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Blankenship** has a 2002 criminal felony conviction for property damage in Webster County, Mo.

Blankenship was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on June 4, 2003, in Springfield.

By pleading guilty, **Blankenship** may be subject to a sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine of up to \$250,000. His sentence will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. A sentencing hearing will be determined after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

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.

* **Brad L. Chambers**, 29, of Ava, Mo., pleaded guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge James C. England this afternoon to being an unlawful user of a controlled substance in possession of a firearm

By pleading guilty, **Chambers** admitted that he was in possession of a Mossberg 12 gauge shotgun, a Marlin .22 caliber rifle, a Colt .22 caliber pistol and a Ruger 10/22 carbine .22 caliber rifle on May 5, 2003 in Douglas County, Mo. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for anyone who is an unlawful user of a controlled substance to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition.

Chambers was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on July 10, 2003, in Kansas City.

By pleading guilty, **Chambers** may be subject to a sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine of up to \$250,000. His sentence will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. A sentencing hearing will be determined after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant United States Attorney Douglas D. Gaston. It was investigated by the Douglas County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the South Central Drug Task Force, the Ava, Mo., Police Department, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

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

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow