



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
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JULY 9, 2003

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOUR SOUTHERN MISSOURI MEN INDICTED FOR VIOLATING FEDERAL FIREARMS LAWS

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that four southern Missouri men were indicted by a federal grand jury today in separate and unrelated charges of violating federal firearms laws.

* **Michael W. Johnson**, 35, of Ava, Mo., was charged in a four-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury meeting in Springfield.

Count One of the federal indictment alleges that **Johnson** was in possession of a .30-06 caliber Remington rifle on Jan. 14 and 15, 2002, in Douglas 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. **Johnson** has 1986 criminal felony convictions for stealing and second degree burglary in Douglas County, 1988 criminal felony convictions for second degree robbery and auto theft in Jackson County, Mo., and a 1997 criminal felony conviction for stealing in Ozark County, Mo.

Count Two of the federal indictment alleges that **Johnson** was also in possession of a .22 magnum caliber Marlin rifle as well as various ammunition on April 29, 2003.

Count Three of the federal indictment alleges that **Johnson** was in possession of a stolen firearm – the .22 magnum caliber Marlin rifle alleged in Count Two.

Count Four of the federal indictment alleges that **Johnson** was in possession of methamphetamine on April 29, 2003 in Douglas County.

The case is being prosecuted by Deputy U.S. Attorney Michael A. Jones. It was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Firearms, Tobacco and Explosives and the Douglas County Sheriff's Department.

* **Charles Sours**, 39, of Joplin, 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 **Sours** was in possession of a Sten 9mm machine gun and 102 rounds of Winchester 9mm ammunition on June 24, 2003, in Newton 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. **Sours** has a 1996 criminal felony convictions for burglary of a building in Tarrant County, Texas.

Count Two of the federal indictment alleges that **Sours** was in possession of a machine gun, the Sten 9mm machine gun alleged in Count One.

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

* **Lawrence D. Friend**, 48, of Gainesville, Mo., was charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury meeting in Springfield.

The federal indictment alleges that **Friend** was in possession of a Marlin .22 caliber rifle on Jan. 9, 2003, in Ozark 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. **Friend** has a 1992 criminal felony conviction for possession of a controlled substance in Ozark County, and 1985 criminal felony convictions for possession of a controlled substance and resisting arrest in Taney County, Mo.

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

* **Robert G. Gates**, 52, of Purdy, Mo., was charged with being a felon in possession of a firearm in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury meeting in Springfield.

The federal indictment alleges that **Gates** 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.

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

Graves cautioned that the charges contained in today's 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.

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