



U.S. Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Michigan

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For Immediate Release:
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June 29, 2009

Event: Indictment

Defendant: B. Jay Rodriguez et al

THREE MEN ARRESTED IN DOG FIGHTING VENTURE

Terrence Berg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan, announced that B. JAY RODRIGUEZ, 28, of Adrian, Michigan, MARTIN PHILLIPS, 34, of Bad Axe, Michigan and JOSHUA GATES, 25, of Blissfield, Michigan, were indicted on charges of Conspiracy to Sponsor and Promote an Animal Fighting Venture, Buying, Selling, Delivering or Transporting Animals for Participation in an Animal Fighting Venture, Sponsoring or Exhibiting an Animal in a Fighting Venture, and Promoting an Animal in a Fighting Venture.

The indictment, the first of it's kind in this district, charges the Defendants with engaging in a conspiracy to promote and engage in an animal fighting venture in which American Pit Bull Terriers were bred, sold, trained, and promoted for the purpose of engaging in dog fighting matches. The Defendants are also charged with sponsoring dogs in fighting matches. Defendant PHILLIPS has been involved in the dog fighting venture, "Pitformance Kennels," since as early as 2005 and has worked with co-Defendants GATES and RODRIGUEZ to develop and promote the dog fighting enterprise. On June 17, 2009, federal agents together with state and local law enforcement executed three simultaneous search warrants at the

Defendants' residences in Lenawee and Huron Counties. Officers seized a total of forty-nine (49) dogs in the raids, along with training equipment, veterinary supplies, and underground dog fighting publications. The United States Humane Society also assisted in the execution of the search warrants.

Acting United States Attorney Terrence Berg said, "This case represents a significant step toward dismantling this underground network of animal cruelty."

Berg praised the work of the East Lansing Office of the United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General, Special Agents Robert Bell and Jeffrey Nickols as well as the efforts of Lenawee and Huron Counties' state and local law enforcement agencies. "Their dedication and skill led to the identification and apprehension of three dangerous individuals. The USDA demonstrated professionalism and dedication in their aggressive and thorough investigation of this case."

Gates appeared in federal court this afternoon and was temporarily detained pending a hearing tomorrow. Phillips and Rodriguez are scheduled to make their initial appearance tomorrow afternoon.

If convicted of the charges, each could face a maximum penalty of five years in prison.

Assistant United States Attorney Eaton Brown is prosecuting the case for the United States.