



PRESS NOTICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**COLUMBIA GANG MEMBER SENTENCED TO 120 MONTHS
ON FIREARM CHARGE**

COLUMBIA, South Carolina ---- James Anthony Ashford, a/k/a “Pop-A-Lot”, age 27, of Columbia, South Carolina, was sentenced today to 120 months (10 years) imprisonment, which will be followed by three (3) years supervised release. Chief United States District Judge Margaret B. Seymour imposed the sentence today after Ashford’s earlier guilty plea to the charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm and ammunition. The sentence was the maximum allowed under the law.

Evidence presented at the earlier guilty plea hearing and during the contested sentencing hearing established that on April 20, 2011, officers with the Columbia Police Department responded to a 911 call regarding a shooting at the Colony Apartments, off Beltline Boulevard. When officers arrived, they found a 24 year old male, who had been shot

twice, once in the groin and once in the buttocks. A female stated that the shooter, identified as Ashford, had also fired at her twice before running away. Officers were able to locate Ashford, a Folk gang member, a short time later and recovered a .38 caliber revolver from him. During the contested sentencing hearing, Ashford testified, "I tote a gun everyday because the neighborhood...is dangerous because of gang members." The shooting allegedly stemmed from a verbal altercation earlier in the day between several individuals.

Ashford is prohibited under federal law from possessing firearms and/or ammunition based upon his prior separate state convictions for trafficking crack cocaine and possession of crack cocaine. Ashford also has prior state convictions, which include unlawful weapon, resisting arrest, possession of marijuana, receiving stolen goods, and use of motor vehicle without owner's permission. In light of the fact that Ashford used the firearm to shoot the victim, during sentencing, the court applied a cross-reference to attempted second degree murder and sentenced Ashford to the maximum statutory sentence of 120 months imprisonment.

The case was investigated by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) and the Columbia Police Department, and was prosecuted as part of the joint federal, state and local Project CeaseFire initiative, which aggressively prosecutes firearm cases. Assistant United States Attorney Stacey D. Haynes of the Columbia office handled the prosecution of the case.

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