



Department of Justice

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DEFENDANTS CONVICTED AFTER WEEK-LONG TRIAL OF TRADING MACHINE GUN, ASSAULT WEAPONS FOR DRUGS

Defendants Face Mandatory Minimum Sentences of Thirty-Five Years in Prison

ATLANTA, GA - A jury in federal district court returned a guilty verdict today against MARK ANTHONY BECKFORD, 43, and RANDY VANA HAILE, JR., 29, both of Atlanta, Georgia, on federal drug and firearms charges for attempting to provide Mexican cartel traffickers with assault weapons, including a machine gun, in exchange for kilograms of cocaine and marijuana. The purported drug traffickers who were willing to accept the guns in exchange for the drugs were undercover federal agents, however, resulting in their arrest and convictions after a week-long trial.

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates said of today's verdict, "These defendants tried to give assault rifles and a machine gun to purported Mexican drug cartel members in exchange for kilograms of cocaine and marijuana. This case demonstrates that we are aggressively pursuing both the high-level suppliers of drugs in Atlanta as well as anyone who is willing to supply them with deadly weapons."

Rodney G. Benson, Special Agent in Charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Atlanta Field Division stated, "Drug dealing breeds violence because dangerous criminals take extreme measures to protect their ill-gotten gains, as was the case in this investigation. DEA and the entire law enforcement community are committed to making our society safer by removing such criminals from the streets. This guilty verdict was possible because of the concerted investigative efforts of our federal, state and local law enforcement counterparts."

"These men arrived armed to the teeth to conduct a major drug deal on the streets of metro Atlanta," said Special Agent in Charge Gregory Gant of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). "What's more, they callously supplied guns to an undercover ATF agent, who led them to believe that the firearms would be delivered to members of a Mexican drug cartel. The potential for violence was clear. Today's verdict demonstrates the success that can be accomplished when agencies join together to address armed drug violators in our midst."

According to United States Attorney Yates, the indictment, evidence at trial, and other information presented in court: In April 2009, agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration (“DEA”) working for Atlanta’s High Intensity Drug Task Force Area (“HIDTA”), and agents for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (“ATF”), initiated an investigation of the defendants using a confidential informant. On April 15, 2009, BECKFORD traveled to San Antonio and met with the confidential informant and an undercover DEA agent posing as a source of supply for large quantities of cocaine and marijuana. The undercover DEA agent and BECKFORD negotiated for the purchase of marijuana and cocaine that the agent said he would deliver to Atlanta.

On April 22, 2009, in Atlanta, an undercover ATF agent met with BECKFORD, who was accompanied by HAILE, to further discuss the drug transaction. It was agreed at this meeting that BECKFORD and HAILE would provide an up-front payment of \$25,000 in cash for transportation of the drugs to Atlanta. The following day, on April 23, 2009, BECKFORD and HAILE traveled to San Antonio, met with the San Antonio undercover agent, and delivered to him \$25,000, which had been concealed in a secret compartment in their luggage. BECKFORD and HAILE agreed that they would initially take delivery of approximately three kilograms of cocaine and 500 pounds of marijuana, with more to follow if the drugs were of good quality. BECKFORD and HAILE agreed to pay for the drugs with a combination of money and firearms, including a machine gun and "AK"-style assault rifles.

On May 5, 2009, the day of the scheduled delivery, the undercover DEA agent and the undercover ATF agent met with BECKFORD and HAILE at a hotel parking lot in Smyrna, Georgia. In the parking lot, the undercover agents showed the defendants approximately 1,000 pounds of marijuana and 5 kilograms of cocaine contained in a U-Haul trailer. After inquiring about the cost of the entire load, BECKFORD and HAILE told the undercover agents that they could provide approximately \$70,000 and numerous firearms to pay or trade for the marijuana and cocaine. The undercover DEA agent advised the defendants that they had 2 hours to return to the parking lot to conduct the transaction.

Later that day, DEA, ATF, and HIDTA agents and officers arrested BECKFORD and HAILE, who were driving a black Chevy Avalanche near the hotel parking lot. During a search of the Avalanche, agents discovered the following items: \$70,000 in cash, a loaded .40-caliber Taurus handgun, two Norinco 7.62-caliber SK assault rifles, and a 9-millimeter, fully automatic M-11 machine gun, among other things. A search of the defendants revealed a Glock .45-caliber pistol in HAILE'S waistband.

After the arrest, agents and officers executed a search warrant at Jamaica Flava, a restaurant associated with the defendants. The search revealed two loaded 7.62-caliber assault rifles, a 12-gauge shotgun, a loaded .25-caliber handgun, and three plastic bags containing marijuana, among other evidence of drug trafficking.

The defendants were convicted of conspiring to possess with intent to distribute

cocaine and marijuana and attempting to do the same; possession of a firearm, including a machine gun, in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime; possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number; and possession of an unregistered machine gun. HAILE was also convicted of being a felon in possession of a firearm. BECKFORD and HAILE both face a mandatory minimum term of incarceration of at least 35 years in prison because they possessed approximately 3 kilograms of cocaine and a machine gun.

This case was investigated by Special Agents of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the High Intensity Drug Task Force Area.

Assistant United States Attorneys Rodney D. Bullard and Bret R. Williams prosecuted the case.

For further information please contact Sally Quillian Yates, United States Attorney, or John Horn, First Assistant United States Attorney at 404-581-6016 . The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.justice.gov/usao/gan.