



U.S. Department of Justice

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*Eastern District of Pennsylvania*

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For Immediate Release

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## **MT. CARMEL, PA MEN CHARGED WITH STEALING GUN USED IN DEADLY SHOOTOUT WITH POLICE**

PHILADELPHIA - United States Attorney Pat Meehan and Berks County District Attorney Mark Baldwin today announced the unsealing of an indictment<sup>1</sup> against Joshua Matthew Peregrin and Sean Thomas Starkoski, charging them with conspiracy to possess a stolen firearm, receipt or possession of a stolen firearm, possession of a firearm with an obliterated serial number, and being illegal drug users in possession of a firearm. The indictment alleges that in May of 2004, Peregrin and Starkoski were involved in stealing a .40 caliber Bereta, semi-automatic handgun, filing off its serial number and trading it for heroin. The gun eventually ended up in the hands of Andrew Smith, charged elsewhere.

On June 4, 2004, Andrew Smith used this Bereta firearm when he became involved in a shootout with Reading Police. During the exchange of gunfire, Reading Police Officer Michael Wise was shot and killed by friendly fire. Smith was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and aggravated assault in connection with Officer Wise's death.

"The law enforcement community and the community at large suffer a severe blow when a police officer is killed," said Meehan. "It's important to recognize that the chain of events in this case that ultimately led to a police officer's death, can be traced back to a stolen firearm. This case exemplifies how committed we are to holding accountable those criminals who have no regard for how the firearms they trade on the street might be used."

This indictment is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods. Project Safe Neighborhoods is a joint initiative by the United States Attorney's Office, the Berks County District Attorney's Office, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Reading Police Department, the Berks County Sheriff's Department, and other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to identify and prosecute firearms offenders in federal court, where the defendants are likely to receive a substantial sentence upon conviction.

Defendants Peregrin and Starkoski face a total possible maximum sentence of 45 years imprisonment, up to 3 years supervised release, a \$1,000,000 fine and a \$400 special assessment.

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<sup>1</sup> An indictment is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

INFORMATION REGARDING THE DEFENDANT

NAME	ADDRESS	AGE OR DATE OF BIRTH
JOSHUA MATTHEW PEREGRIN	MOUNT CARMEL, PA	25
SEAN THOMAS STARKOSKI	MOUNT CARMEL, PA	21

The case has been assigned to Assistant United States Attorney Francis C. Barbieri, Jr. and Special Assistant United States Attorney Kevin Howard.

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