



Department of Justice

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Lexington Man Sentenced to 97 Months for Buying and Selling Stolen Firearms as a Convicted Felon

LEXINGTON, Ky. – Wayne Russell Fugate, 49, of Lexington was sentenced on Monday, by Chief United States District Judge Danny C. Reeves, to 97 months in federal prison for buying and selling stolen firearms and for being a convicted felon in possession of over 25 stolen firearms.

Beginning in 2017, the eastern Kentucky area, as well as areas in Tennessee and Ohio, experienced a number of vehicle break-ins where firearms were stolen. A law enforcement task force led to the arrest of Dario Adrian Mauriz-Cruz, 27, and Jeremy D. Stidham, 27, as suspects in these break-ins. The investigation determined that Fugate acted as a “fence” for Stidham and Cruz, buying stolen firearms from them.

According to Fugate’s plea agreement, investigators executed a search warrant at his residence in Lexington, in November 2017. There, they located 22 stolen firearms and over 2,000 rounds of ammunition. Further investigation recovered six more stolen firearms purchased by Fugate. Fugate admitted to selling firearms to at least 11 others. Fugate had a prior federal felony conviction for being an unlawful user of controlled substances in possession of firearms.

Both Stidham and Cruz pleaded guilty to federal firearms charges, in August 2019. Cruz, also a convicted felon, was sentenced to ten years in prison for his role in stealing the firearms. Stidham was sentenced to 100 months.

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Tommy Estevan, Acting Special Agent in Charge for ATF Louisville Field Division; Richard W. Sanders, KSP Commissioner; Chief Lawrence Weathers, Lexington Police Department; Michael Helmig, Boone County Sheriff; Matt Sparks, Rowan County Sheriff; Ernie Kelty, Mercer County Sheriff; and Mike Coyle, Madison County Sheriff, collectively announced the sentencing.

The investigation was conducted by the ATF, Boone County Sheriff’s Office, the Kentucky State Police, Lexington Police Department, Madison County Sheriff’s Office, Mercer County Sheriff’s Office, and Rowan County Sheriff’s Office. The United States was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Roger W. West.