



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Florida

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CONVICTED FELON SENTENCED TO 30 YEARS

Tampa, FL - U.S. Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announces that U.S. District Judge Richard A. Lazzara today sentenced Ernest Blanco, Jr. (55, Pasco County) to 360 months in federal prison for being a felon in possession of firearms. Blanco was found to be an armed career criminal. The court also ordered Blanco to forfeit his interest in all of the firearms.

Ernest Blanco, Jr. pled guilty on March 29, 2011.

According to court documents, Blanco and co-defendant Ray Alexander, Jr. sold several firearms to an undercover special agent from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) for approximately \$5,000.00. At sentencing, Judge Lazzara held Blanco responsible for the burglary in which the guns were stolen, and for lying during the sentencing hearing.

Alexander was sentenced on June 10, 2011 to 78 months in federal prison for his role in the crime.

This case was investigated by ATF. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Walter E. Furr, III.

It is another case prosecuted as a part of the Department of Justice's "Project Safe Neighborhoods" program - a nationwide, gun-violence reduction strategy led by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill, along with Virginia O'Brien, Special Agent in Charge, ATF, is coordinating the Project Safe Neighborhoods effort here in the Middle District of Florida, in cooperation with federal, state, and local law enforcement officials.