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SIKES, LOUISIANA MAN CONVICTED OF FIRING SHOTS AT LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD HELICOPTER

Shreveport, La.: United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced today that James Lamar Kelly, age 61, of Sikes, Louisiana, was found guilty of three felony counts by a jury last night in federal court in Alexandria of three counts which charged Kelly with endangering the safety of the pilot of a Louisiana Army National Guard helicopter in flight, committing an act of violence against the pilot, and using a deadly and dangerous weapon to forcibly assault, resist, oppose, impede, intimidate and interfere with the pilot.

Testimony at the two-day trial before U.S. District Judge Dee Drell showed that on August 2, 2010, the Louisiana State Police and the Winn Parish Sheriff's Office were conducting a marijuana eradication program detail in Winn Parish. Louisiana Army National Guard (LANG) Counter-Drug Task Force helicopters based at Camp Beauregard in Pineville were assisting in this program by providing pilots and helicopters for the Louisiana State Police to use to conduct aerial surveillance. The LANG Counter Drug Task Force is funded and staffed by the U.S. Department of Defense. This case began when a Louisiana State Trooper was in each helicopter making observations of areas where it was suspected marijuana was being cultivated. At about 3:00 p.m., on Shell Road near Sikes, La., one of these helicopters was fired upon by a person on the ground. The pilot took action and immediately left the area. He landed at the airport in Natchitoches and inspected the helicopter for damage. No bullet holes were found, and neither the pilot nor the Trooper on board were injured. Soon thereafter, Louisiana State Police Troopers, Winn Parish Sheriff's Deputies, and a Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Agent located and arrested James Lamar Kelly without incident. They also recovered the 9 mm semi-automatic handgun that Kelly used to shoot at the helicopter.

While at Kelly's house, Troopers noted a large amount of undelivered mail in various vehicles parked in Kelly's yard. Kelly was working for a private contractor who had a contract to deliver mail to over 250 U.S. Postal Service customers on a rural route in Winn Parish. Kelly admitted that instead of delivering the mail on his route, he brought it back to his house where he kept it until he either placed it in a dumpster or burned it. Kelly also admitted that he had not been delivering the mail for approximately four years.

Kelly was indicted for the three charges concerning his firing shots at the helicopter and an additional charge of theft of mail. Kelly entered a guilty plea to the theft of mail charge on August 23, 2012, and pled not guilty to the charges related to the helicopter.

Kelly is on bond and scheduled to be sentenced on December 14, 2012, for four offenses of conviction. He faces a maximum sentence of 20 years imprisonment on each count concerning the shots fired at the helicopter. The maximum sentence for theft of mail is five years imprisonment. Additionally, Kelly can be sentenced a fine of \$250,000, 3 years of supervised release on each charge and forfeiture of his firearm.

U.S. Attorney Finley stated, "Firing shots at any aircraft is a serious crime which endangers both those on the aircraft and those below. This Army National Guard helicopter pilot was performing an important mission in assisting the State Trooper on board and State Police Troopers and Winn Parish Sheriff's Deputies on the ground in their drug eradication program. Luckily, no one was hurt by the defendant's illegal conduct."

This case was investigated by the Louisiana State Police, Region II in Alexandria, the United States Postal Service, Office of Inspector General Office, and the FBI. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robert W. Gillespie, Jr.

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