



# Department of Justice

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## Four Plead Guilty to Federal Charges of Selling Stolen Firearms

**LEXINGTON, Ky.** – Jeremy D. Stidham, Dario Adrian Mauriz-Cruz, Wayne Russell Fugate, and Larry Joe Burton have all entered guilty pleas to federal charges related to stolen firearms. Stidham and Mauriz-Cruz pleaded guilty to stealing firearms and selling them. Fugate pleaded guilty to buying stolen firearms and illegally possessing more than 25 firearms, as a convicted felon. Burton pleaded guilty to possessing two stolen firearms, including a M-16 semi-automatic rifle stolen from law enforcement.

In September and October 2017, several locations in Kentucky, Ohio, and Tennessee experienced a number of vehicle break-ins, where firearms, credit cards and other items were stolen. A multi-jurisdictional task force investigation identified Stidham and Mauriz-Cruz as the primary suspects. The investigation also established that more than 50 firearms had been stolen, along with other personal property. These firearms were sold to at least two others, including Fugate and Burton.

In executing a search warrant at Fugate's residence, law enforcement located 22 stolen firearms and more than 2,000 rounds of ammunition. Subsequent investigation recovered six additional firearms purchased by Fugate. Law enforcement also searched Burton's residence and, through further investigation, recovered the M-16 semi-automatic rifle that had been stolen from law enforcement.

Stidham, 25, pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting the possession of stolen firearms. Mauriz-Cruz, 27, pleaded guilty to aiding and abetting the possession of stolen firearms and to being a felon in possession of firearms. Fugate, 49, pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of more than 25 stolen firearms and Burton, 59, pleaded guilty to possession of stolen firearms.

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Stuart Lowery, Special Agent in Charge, ATF; Richard Sanders, Commissioner, KSP; 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 jointly announce the guilty pleas. The United States was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Roger W. West.

Stidham, Cruz, and Burton are scheduled to be sentenced on August 26, 2019; Fugate is scheduled to be sentenced on September 3, 2019. Each faces up to ten years in prison and a fine of \$250,000. However, any sentence will be imposed by the Court, after consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the federal statutes.

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