



Department of Justice

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Montgomery County Man Pleads Guilty to Federal Firearm and Drug Charges

LEXINGTON, Ky. - A Jeffersonville, Kentucky man, Ryan Keith Herndon, 29, admitted in federal court on Thursday, before U.S. District Judge Karen Caldwell, that he sold a firearm to a convicted felon, possessed a firearm as a convicted felon, and distributed a mixture of various controlled substances.

In his plea agreement, Herndon admitted that, on May 9, 2019, he sold a Walther .40 caliber pistol to a confidential informant working on behalf of the Appalachian High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (AHIDTA) Gateway Drug Task Force and ATF. Then, on May 10, 2019, Herndon sold the confidential informant another firearm, a Century Arms 7.62 x 39 rifle. Herndon was a convicted felon and was prohibited from lawfully possessing or selling firearms. At the time Herndon sold the firearms, he knew or had reasonable cause to believe that the confidential informant was a convicted felon.

Additionally, on May 21, 2019, Herndon sold a substance containing the drugs heroin, valeryl fentanyl, fentanyl, and methamphetamine to a confidential informant working for the Mt. Sterling Police Department. Then, on May 22, 2019, Herndon sold a quantity of methamphetamine to a confidential informant.

Herndon was indicted in June 2019.

Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky; Tommy Estevan, Acting Special Agent in Charge, ATF Louisville Field Division; and Chief Wayne Green, Mt. Sterling Police Department, jointly announced the guilty plea.

The investigation was conducted by the AHIDTA Gateway Drug Task Force, ATF and the Mt. Sterling Police Department. The U.S. Attorney's Office was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Francisco Villalobos II.

Herndon is scheduled to be sentenced on May 21, 2020. He faces up to 30 years in prison and a maximum fine of \$2.5 million. However, any sentence will be imposed by the Court after its consideration of the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and the federal sentencing statutes.

This is another case prosecuted as part of the Department of Justice’s [“Project Safe Neighborhoods” Program \(PSN\)](#), which is a nationwide, crime reduction strategy aimed at decreasing violent crime in communities. It involves a comprehensive approach to public safety — one that includes investigating and prosecuting crimes, along with prevention and reentry efforts. In the Eastern District of Kentucky, U.S. Attorney Robert Duncan Jr., coordinates PSN efforts in cooperation with various federal, state, and local law enforcement officials.

This case is also part of Project Guardian, the Department of Justice’s signature initiative to reduce gun violence and enforce federal firearms laws. Initiated by the Attorney General in the fall of 2019, Project Guardian draws upon the Department’s past successful programs to reduce gun violence; enhances coordination of federal, state, local, and tribal authorities in investigating and prosecuting gun crimes; improves information-sharing by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives when a prohibited individual attempts to purchase a firearm and is denied by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS), to include taking appropriate actions when a prospective purchaser is denied by the NICS for mental health reasons; and ensures that federal resources are directed at the criminals posing the greatest threat to our communities. Click [here](#) for more information about Project Guardian.

The year 2020 marks the 150th anniversary of the Department of Justice. Learn more about the history of our agency at www.Justice.gov/Celebrating150Years.

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