



U. S. Department of Justice

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CONVICTED FELON SENTENCED TO OVER 10 YEARS IN PRISON FOR FIREARM AND DRUG RELATED OFFENSES

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA – Lascelles Ford, Jr., of Lake City, was sentenced on Tuesday to over 10 years in federal prison after pleading guilty on January 5, 2021, to possessing controlled substances with the intent to distribute, possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, and possessing a firearm and ammunition as a convicted felon. Jason R. Coody, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Florida, announced the sentence.

“The Gainesville Gun Violence Initiative continues to get results,” said Acting U.S. Attorney Coody. “This defendant, who brazenly sold drugs in the light of day and carried a loaded weapon, was brought to justice through the collaborative work of our GVI partners. His sentence ensures that his community will be safer and sends a message that there are real and severe consequences for drug trafficking and firearm offenses in the Gainesville area.”

On April 1, 2020, investigators from the Alachua Police Department (APD) set up a narcotics surveillance detail in a residential neighborhood after receiving repeated complaints about drug dealing activity. During their surveillance that day, they observed Ford repeatedly engage in hand-to-hand drug transactions in broad daylight. At one point, the investigators observed Ford actually load a piece of crack cocaine into a pipe for one of his customers to smoke. As the surveillance continued, investigators observed Ford reach into a bag he was carrying and manipulate the slide of a semi-automatic pistol.

APD investigators were familiar with Ford and his criminal history as a convicted felon, so they decided to move in for an arrest. As the officers approached Ford, he fled on foot, while still carrying the bag containing the firearm. Ford fled into a nearby house, where he discarded the bag before being called back outside by law enforcement. Officers obtained a search warrant for the residence, which led to the discovery of Ford's bag containing a stolen Glock .40 caliber pistol with an extended magazine and 9 live rounds of ammunition. The bag also contained crack cocaine and powder cocaine. A search of Ford's person led to discovery of another live round of .40 caliber ammunition.

After Ford's arrest, his case was adopted for federal prosecution by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) as part of the Gainesville Gun Violence Initiative. The Gainesville GVI was established in April 2019, by the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida in an effort to stem the escalating gun violence in Gainesville and the surrounding area. As GVI partners, the State Attorney's Office for the Eighth Judicial Circuit, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, the Gainesville Police Department, the Alachua County Sheriff's Office, the Alachua Police Department, the University of Florida Police Department, and the Florida Department of Corrections share this commitment to protecting public safety.

"Reducing violent crime and protecting the public in the communities that we serve is a priority for the ATF", said ATF Special Agent in Charge Craig W. Saier. "We will continue to work vigorously with our law enforcement partners to make sure those individuals who commit violent firearms crimes are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Ford, 28, will serve concurrent sentences of just over 5 years each for the charges of possession with intent to distribute (crack cocaine and cocaine) and possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Those prison terms will be followed by a consecutive 5 year sentence for possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime, for a total prison term of 10 years and 3 months. The Court also ordered 5 years of supervised release following Ford's prison term. Ford has one prior felony conviction and a history of domestic violence and firearm-related charges.

This sentencing resulted from the collaborative work of the APD and ATF. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Chris Elsey.

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