



Acting AG Henry, DA Steele, DA Weintraub, and Other Officials Announce Dismantling of Major Gun Trafficking Organization

Defendants illegally obtained and sold 94 firearms purchased in Bucks, Chester, Columbia, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia and York counties

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NORRISTOWN — Acting Attorney General Michelle Henry, Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele, Bucks County District Attorney Matthew Weintraub, together with local, state and federal law enforcement officials today announced the dismantling of a Pennsylvania gun trafficking organization. The organization, headed by Larry Williams, purchased 94 firearms and attempted to purchase an additional 23 firearms in counties across Pennsylvania, before illegally reselling them throughout the Southeastern region of the state. The eight defendants, all from Philadelphia, were arrested on dozens of felony charges related to straw purchases of firearms, illegally transferring firearms, and operating a corrupt organization.

[Arrested](#) were **Larry Williams**, 40, who was responsible for directing the purchases of the firearms, selling the majority of the illegal firearms and was also involved in trafficking illegal drugs; **Robert Cooper III**, 23, purchased 41 firearms and attempted

to purchase an additional eight firearms in less than two months; **Ziair Stenson**, 26; purchased 36 firearms and attempted to purchase an additional seven firearms; **Malik Rowell-Jernigan**, 24, purchased eight firearms and attempted to purchase an additional three firearms; **Kevin Lester Logan**, 24, purchased three firearms; **Daynell Jones**, 40, purchased three firearms; **Zakayla S. Deshields**, 22, purchased three firearms; and **Shadiid Smalley**, 23, attempted to purchase five firearms.

The firearm purchases were all “straw purchases,” meaning a person with a clean background purchased firearms specifically on behalf of another person to conceal the true ownership of the firearm. The true owner of the firearm is often prohibited from legally purchasing a firearm including convicted felons, domestic violence offenders, juveniles and individuals with mental illness.

In June 2022, the Montgomery County Detective Bureau initiated an investigation into illegal activities associated with the gun trafficking organization. Law enforcement began following the multiple purchases of firearms by the defendants through the Electronic Record of Sale (EROS) system and through hard copies of ATF and Pennsylvania State Police forms at gun stores. Detectives used surveillance, interviews, information from law enforcement agencies, call detail records and cellphone downloads, social media analysis, records of cash transfers, inspection of forms used in purchasing firearms and other methods of investigation. Collaboration between law enforcement agencies and increased data sharing through initiatives like Track and Trace aided in uncovering the scale and interconnectedness of the widespread operation.

The following law enforcement organizations participated in this investigation: the Office of Attorney General’s Gun Violence Task Force; Montgomery County Detective Bureau’s Violent Crimes Unit; Bucks County District Attorney’s Drug Strike Force; U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF); Pennsylvania State Police; Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole; FBI Bucks Montgomery Safe Streets Task Force; U.S. Marshal’s Violent Crimes Fugitive Task Force; New York State Police and multiple police departments including Abington Township Police, Philadelphia Police, Middletown Township Police, Wolcott (Conn.) Police, Darby Police, New York City Police and the Pittsburgh Police.

Of the 94 total straw purchased and illegally sold firearms, 29 were recovered by law enforcement through the execution of search warrants related to other criminal activity, car stops, or after the firearms were used in violent crimes.

“The members of this gun trafficking organization managed to obtain and sell nearly 100 illegal firearms. Far too frequently these weapons end up in the hands of dangerous individuals to be used to commit crimes and fuel gun violence in our communities,” said Acting AG Henry. “I am grateful for the hard work of all the agencies who partnered in this investigation. Together, we will continue to fight hard

to stop the trafficking of firearms in our state and make Pennsylvania safer for all who live here.”

“Gun trafficking is a serious crime that endangers our communities since these illegal firearms are sold on to people who can’t buy their own guns. Many of these guns were recovered by law enforcement after being used in violent crimes, not only locally but traveling out of state, which is a threat to public safety and every law-abiding citizen,” said DA Steele. “Law enforcement is committed to fighting these illegal gun sales and gun trafficking organizations whose sole purchase is to make money by arming criminals.”

District Attorney Weintraub emphasized the violence associated with illegal firearms. “After these guns were purchased illegally, many were then used by criminals to commit violent crimes,” said Weintraub. “Working together, our goal is to deter straw purchases by vigorously investigating each one and holding the gun purchasers and end users criminally accountable. This requires relentless commitment by law enforcement. We will not rest. More to come.”

The defendants were arrested on various criminal charges, including felony counts of Corrupt Organizations, Conspiracy and firearms charges related to illegal purchase and sales. Other charges include Dealing in Proceeds of Unlawful Activities, Criminal Use of Communications Facilities, Materially False Statements and multiple related offenses.

All charges are accusations. The defendants are innocent unless and until proven guilty.