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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GUN TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION OPERATING IN MONTGOMERY, BUCKS, BERKS, LANCASTER AND PHILADELPHIA COUNTIES DISMANTLED

Fourteen defendants illegally obtained and sold 31 firearms



QUINN WHISTED

MALIQA JACK

ALEXANDER SMITH

TONY PEARSON

DAVEESE SMITH



DAESHAUN WYNDER

JEROME WYNDER

TAYE WYNDER

KRISTEN OWENS

TALANI EWELL

DEBORAH CHAPPELL

[Click here to read the criminal complaint](#)

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (Feb. 17, 2021) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele, Montgomery Township Police Chief Scott Bendig, Plymouth Township Police Chief John C. Myrsiades and Pennsylvania State Police Lt. Joseph Altieri announced the dismantling of a gun trafficking organization that illegally obtained and resold 31 firearms in Montgomery, Berks, Bucks, Lancaster and Philadelphia counties, as well as dealt in the sale of “ghost guns.” Fourteen men and women were arrested on charges related to straw purchases of firearms and illegally transferring firearms.

The gun trafficking organization was fueled by firearm purchases by **Quinn Whisted**, 22, of Plymouth Meeting, who purchased 17 firearms; **Maliqa Jack**, 25, of Pottstown, who

purchased seven firearms; **Makayla Prince**, 22, of Reading, who purchased four firearms; and **Deborah Chappell**, 61, of Pottstown, who purchased one firearm. Those firearms were purchased on behalf of the gun trafficking organization led by **Alexander Smith**, 20, of Plymouth Meeting; **Daveese Smith**, 22, and **Tony Pearson**, 40, both of Norristown; **Taye Wynder**, 20, **Daeshaun Wynder**, 22, and **Jerome Wynder**, 24, all of Pottstown; **Tymir Allen**, 22, of Philadelphia; **Joseph Zummo**, 26, of Bridgeport; **Kristen Owens**, 24, of Plymouth Meeting, and **Talani Ewell**, 20, of Newcastle, Dela. Two additional illegal firearms were seized during the arrest of the three Wynder brothers—one had an obliterated serial number and one is being traced.

This investigation began when Montgomery County Detectives were investigating another gun trafficking organization charged in September 2020. In the course of that investigation, detectives performed a network analysis of those defendants in order to identify other illegal firearms and their gun trafficking networks. That analysis led to identifying this gun trafficking organization, its many operatives and its illegally purchased and transferred firearms, which was not connected to the other organization.

From there, law enforcement began following the multiple purchases of firearms by Whisted 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, inspection of forms used in purchasing firearms and other methods of investigation. The investigation led them to identify three other straw purchasers, in addition to Whisted, as well as 10 other defendants involved in the illegal gun trafficking organization. One of those 10 defendants—Alexander Smith—was also purchasing “ghost gun” materials from websites and assembling the guns, then offering them for sale.

“Ghost guns” or “Ghosts” are guns—everything from handguns to rifles—that are made from firearms assembly kits, which are available for purchase on various websites as well as at gun shows. The firearms built via assembly kits are without serial numbers, do not require the purchaser of the kit to undergo a background check and lack traceability, hence the name Ghosts or ghost guns. A number of states have made ghost guns illegal, including New Jersey, although they are still legal in Pennsylvania.

A “straw purchase” is when a person with a clean background purchases firearms specifically on behalf of another person to conceal the true ownership of the firearm. Persons who are unable to legally purchase a firearm would include convicted felons, domestic violence misdemeanants, juveniles and mentally ill individuals.

“This group of people was acting together with the sole purchase of making money by putting firearms in the hands of people who cannot lawfully buy and possess guns, in effect arming criminals,” said Steele. “Straw purchases and the sale of those guns to people who cannot buy their own firearm legally are dangerous to the safety of all of our communities, and ‘ghost guns’ are just as dangerous, if not more. Gun trafficking is a significant threat to public safety and should concern every law-abiding citizen.”

The investigation was led by the Montgomery County Detective Bureau’s Violent Crime Unit (VCU), Montgomery Township Police Department, Pennsylvania State Police and Plymouth Township Police Department along with assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), Norristown Police Department, FBI, Bucks and Montgomery County Safe Streets Task Force, Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney

General's Gun Violence Task Force, Pottstown Police Department, Hatfield Township Police Department and Berks County Detectives.

Of the 29 straw purchases identified through this investigation, only six have been recovered: one firearm was recovered on Jan. 7, 2021 during an arrest by the Philadelphia Police for a home invasion robbery; four firearms were recovered during traffic stops; and one firearm was seized when Alex Smith was arrested. Additionally, three were returned, leaving 20 unaccounted for.

The defendants were arrested on various criminal charges, but all include felony counts of Corrupt Organizations and Conspiracy. Other charges include Dealing in Proceeds of Unlawful Activities, Unlawful Transfer of a Firearm, Criminal Use of Communications Facilities, Materially False Statements and multiple related offenses.

Twelve of the 14 defendants will be arraigned and bail will be set this morning before Magisterial District Judge Edward C. Kropp, at which time the preliminary hearing for these defendants will be scheduled. Detectives are still in the process of locating and arresting two defendants: **Allen** and **Zummo**.

The case will be prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Lauren Marvel, who is Captain of the Pottstown Community Justice Unit, and Assistant District Attorney Samantha Arena of the Firearms Unit.

If anyone has information about additional illegal firearms being bought and/or sold by any of these defendants or has information about any illegal firearms purchases and sales, please call the Montgomery County Detective Bureau's Crime Tip Line at 610-278-DOIT (3648).

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.