



Department of Justice

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JURY CONVICTS NAVY SEAL OF WEAPONS CHARGES

LAS VEGAS – A U.S. Navy SEAL was convicted today of federal conspiracy and weapons charges for unlawfully possessing, transporting or selling machine guns, pistols, and explosives, announced Daniel G. Bogden, United States Attorney for the District of Nevada.

Following a three-week jury trial, Nicholas Bickle, 34, of San Diego, was convicted of one count of conspiracy to unlawfully receive, transport, possess and transfer machineguns and stolen firearms and to deal in firearms; one count of dealing in firearms without a license; four counts of possession and transfer of machineguns; five counts of possession, concealment, sale and disposition of stolen firearms; one count of receiving, concealing and retaining property of the United States; and one count of transportation by and distribution of explosives to a non-licensee.

The evidence at trial demonstrated that from about March 2009 to November 2010, Bickle conspired with Richard Paul, 35, of Durango, Colorado, Andrew Kaufman, 37, and Omar Aguirre, 36, both of Las Vegas, to sell machineguns and other weapons procured by Bickle while he was deployed in Iraq. The firearms included over 30 AK-47 type machineguns (some of which bore the markings or symbols of the Iraqi military forces) and multiple pistols previously procured by the United States for Iraqi security forces. Bickle transported the majority of the weapons to Nevada and Colorado where his co-conspirators sold them to others, including an undercover law enforcement agent who expressed the intent to smuggle the weapons to Mexico. Bickle received a substantial portion of the proceeds from the sales of firearms. Bickle was also convicted of unlawfully receiving and retaining government property (ammunition, explosives, grenades and optical sights) valued at more than \$1,000, and unlawfully transporting and transferring approximately five pounds of C-4 explosives.

“As this conviction demonstrates, no one is above the law,” said U.S. Attorney Bogden. “Military members who unlawfully possess or sell military weapons, equipment, and explosives within the United States will be held fully accountable for their actions. I would like to commend our prosecution team, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department (LVMPD), and the Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) for their successful investigation and prosecution of this gun trafficking conspiracy.”

Bickle is scheduled to be sentenced on January 20, 2012, and faces up to 125 years in prison and \$3.25 million in fines.

Aguirre, Paul, and Kaufman, pleaded guilty prior to trial and are scheduled to be sentenced on October 14 and October 28, 2011.

The investigation was conducted by ATF, NCIS, and the LVMPD. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Timothy S. Vasquez and Phillip N. Smith, Jr.

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