

PRESS RELEASE

Previously Convicted Federal Felon Convicted At Trial For Possessing Firearm In Connection With Drug Trafficking Fentanyl

Monday, December 9, 2024

For Immediate Release

U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Maryland

Baltimore, Maryland – After a four day trial, a federal jury found Ryan E. Dales, age 36, guilty of being a felon in possession of a firearm, possession with intent to distribute fentanyl, and possession of a firearm in furtherance of his drug trafficking crime.

The verdict was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Erik L. Barron; Special Agent in Charge William J. DelBagno of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Baltimore Field Office; and Special Agent in Charge Troy W. Springer, of the National Capital Region, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General (DOL-OIG).

A jury trial in connection with the remaining counts in the Superseding Indictment pertaining to Wire Fraud and Aggravated Identity Theft charges is scheduled to begin on January 13, 2025. These charges relate to Dales's alleged receipt of fraudulent unemployment insurance benefits and his alleged use of victim identities to obtain various high-end lawnmowers on credit.

According to the evidence presented at trial, on January 20, 2023, Defendant was arrested pursuant to a federal arrest warrant and, that same day, a federal search warrant was executed at Defendant's residence located at 900 E Fort Ave. in Baltimore—a luxury apartment building in the Locust Point area of Baltimore. During the execution of the search warrant, law enforcement located and seized, among other things various items used in connection with Defendant's illegal business selling drugs, including:

- two loaded firearms, a stolen Smith & Wesson firearm, S/N: HDW0599 and one which was a privately-made “ghost gun” Polymer80 9mm firearm with no serial number;
- a box containing 28 rounds of 9mm ammunition, including hollow point ammunition;
- numerous packages of controlled dangerous substances, including hundreds of grams of fentanyl packaged for street level distribution;
- multiple digital scales; sifters, a heat sealer, a bag containing 10,000 empty capsules meant to package drugs, other drug packing materials, various cutting agents, a respirator; and
- six cell phones.

Dales later voluntarily waived his *Miranda* rights and admitted to living in his apartment alone and that the firearms seized in his apartment were his. He also told law enforcement that he was a “very resourceful person”—referring to his livelihood as a drug dealer. Dales’s DNA was later determined to be present on both firearms and their magazines.

Law enforcement’s later review of Defendant’s devices revealed the existence of numerous Telegram chats where he negotiated purchasing drugs and cutting agents from multiple people, including mass producers of fentanyl in China. Investigators further found evidence that about a month before the execution of the search warrant, Dales traveled to Boston with a firearm (identical in appearance to the ghost gun found in his apartment) and a bag full of cash to purchase drugs. Dales’s device search history included searches for where fentanyl is produced in China, how to dye powders, and how many bullets a Smith and Wesson M&P 9c firearm—the same type seized from his apartment—can hold.

Dales faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in federal prison for being a felon in possession of a firearm; a mandatory minimum of five years and up to 40 years in federal prison for possession with intent to distribute 40 grams or more of fentanyl; a mandatory minimum sentence of five years, consecutive to any other sentence imposed, and up to life in federal prison for possession of a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking. U.S. District Chief Judge George Levi Russell, III, has scheduled sentencing for a later to be determined date.

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (“PSN”), a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce violent crime and gun violence, and to make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. On May 26, 2021, the Department launched a violent crime reduction strategy strengthening PSN based on these core principles: fostering trust and legitimacy in our communities, supporting

community-based organizations that help prevent violence from occurring in the first place, setting focused and strategic enforcement priorities, and measuring the results.

The District of Maryland Strike Force is one of five strike forces established throughout the United States by the U.S. Department of Justice to investigate and prosecute COVID-19 fraud, including fraud relating to the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (“CARES”) Act. The CARES Act was designed to provide emergency financial assistance to Americans suffering the economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The strike forces focus on large-scale, multi-state pandemic relief fraud perpetrated by criminal organizations and transnational actors. The strike forces are interagency law enforcement efforts, using prosecutor-led and data analyst-driven teams designed to identify and bring to justice those who stole pandemic relief funds.

For more information on the Department’s response to the pandemic, please visit <https://www.justice.gov/coronavirus>. Anyone with information about allegations of attempted fraud involving COVID-19 can report it by calling the Department of Justice’s National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCFD) Hotline at 866-720-5721 or via the NCFD Web Complaint Form at: <https://www.justice.gov/disaster-fraud/ncdf-disaster-complaint-form>.

United States Attorney Erek L. Barron commended the FBI and DOL-OIG for their work in connection with the investigation. Mr. Barron thanked Assistant U.S. Attorneys Paul A. Riley, and Reema Sood, who are prosecuting the federal case. He also recognized the assistance of the Maryland COVID-19 Strike Force Paralegal Specialist Joanna B.N. Huber.

For more information on the Maryland U.S. Attorney’s Office, its priorities, and resources available to help the community, please visit www.justice.gov/usao-md and <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/community-outreach>.

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Updated December 9, 2024

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