



# PRESS RELEASE

## Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation *Chief Richard Weber*

Date: Oct. 16, 2015

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IRS – Criminal Investigation

CI Release #: CI-2015-10-16-C

### **Pennsylvania Man Found Guilty by Jury Trial**

U.S. Attorney David Capp for the Northern District of Indiana announced that Vahan Kelerchian, 56, of Richboro, Pennsylvania, doing business as Armament Services International “ASI”, was found guilty of a multitude of charges relating to the acquisition of machineguns and restricted laser aiming sites, late Thursday evening after a two-week jury trial.

According to evidence presented at trial, Kelerchian conspired with Joseph Kumstar and Ronald Slusser, two now former Lake County Police Officers, to knowingly make false statements relating to the acquisition of firearms. Kumstar and Slusser, who have pleaded guilty, used their positions as sworn law enforcement officers in coordination with Kelerchian using his position as a Class 3 Federal Firearms Licensee to acquire approximately 71 fully automatic machineguns in the name of the Lake County Sheriff’s Department knowing that the Lake County Sheriff’s Department was not going to be the true owner of these weapons. Kelerchian, Kumstar and Slusser conspired to use law enforcement letterhead to create letters which falsely represented that the machineguns were going to be used by the Lake County Sheriff’s Department to carry out its law enforcement responsibilities since machineguns manufactured after 1986 can only be acquired by law enforcement agencies and not individual officers. The machineguns were purchased for a cost of \$1200 and \$1600 and then when received by the Sheriff’s Department, transported offsite to be parted out. The barrels aka the “upper” were split with the officers and some were sent back to Kelerchian. The “uppers” sold between \$3000 and \$3600 due to post-1986 parts not being available to the public because only law enforcement agencies or the military can acquire these weapons.

Kelerchian also used his company to assist Kumstar and Slusser to acquire 74 restricted laser aiming sights again using law enforcement letterhead from the Lake County Sheriff’s Department and the Lowell Police Department. These laser sights were restricted by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) because they were class 3b lasers. These lasers were designed, per a variance from FDA, to be used for law enforcement and military use only because they did not have the audible or manual safety locks as required for class 3b lasers. The laser aiming sights had a visible laser that could be seen in excess of 50 feet and an invisible laser that could be used for targeting with infrared goggles in excess of one mile. Kelerchian along with the officers used their positions to acquire these devices and sell them to the general public or keep the devices for themselves.

In addition to the charges above, Kelerchian was also found guilty of money laundering and false statements to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives regarding false demonstration letters involving high powered belt-fed machine guns. Kelerchian was also charged with bribery but was found not guilty of that accusation.

This case is a result of an investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Department of Defense Criminal Investigative Services; Federal Bureau of Investigation; Food and Drug

Administration, Office of Criminal Investigations; and the Internal Revenue Service, Criminal Investigation Division. This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Philip C. Benson and Thomas M. McGrath.

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