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Former Richmond Police Officers Sentenced

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August 23, 2012

OAKLAND, Calif. – Danny Harris Jr. and Raymond Thomas Jr. were sentenced Tuesday to probation, with requirements that they serve time in a halfway house and/or home detention, as a result of their convictions for crimes committed while they were employed as police officers with the Richmond Police Department, United States Attorney Melinda Haag announced.

Harris pleaded guilty on March 9, 2012, to two counts of making false statements in connection with the purchase of firearms, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(a)(6), and one count of conspiring with co-defendant Thomas to obstruct an official proceeding, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1512(k). Thomas pleaded guilty on March 6, 2012, to conspiring with Harris to obstruct an official proceeding, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1512(k).

According to the plea agreement, Harris admitted that on June 19, 2009, and Nov. 9, 2009, while he was employed as an officer with the Richmond Police Department, he knowingly made false statements on federal firearms forms when he purchased two Glock pistols from a federally licensed firearms dealer in San Jose, Calif. The firearms form, which is required by the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, requires the purchaser to disclose the true buyer of the firearm. In pleading guilty, Harris admitted that he lied and said that he was the true buyer when, in fact, the individuals who paid for the guns, and who were going to use and possess the guns, were two minors. Under federal law, firearms dealers are not permitted to sell handguns to individuals under twenty-one years of age.

In connection with the sentencing, the government advised the Court that the under-age individuals for whom Harris purchased the Glock pistols were former Richmond Police Department Explorers who were working for Harris and Thomas at a private security guard business that they were operating without the knowledge or consent of the Richmond Police Department. The government explained that after one of the former Explorers blew the whistle on the defendants' private security business, the defendants attempted to retrieve one of the Glock pistols. In his plea agreement, Harris admitted that he obtained the assistance of co-defendant Thomas in his effort to retrieve the Glock pistol and both defendants admitted that their goal in retrieving the gun was to gain possession of evidence that could be used against Harris in a future federal prosecution. The former police officers admitted that they engaged in this conspiracy with the intention of obstructing, influencing, and impeding a federal investigation and prosecution. In order to accomplish this goal, Thomas admitted that he undertook several acts, including writing a letter to the former Explorer demanding delivery of the gun and filing a suit in Small Claims Court.

"The vast majority of federal, state and local law enforcement officers are honorable public servants who perform their duties with the utmost integrity," U.S. Attorney Haag said. "However, in those rare instances when officers violate their duty to uphold the law and instead commit crimes themselves, this office will not hesitate to hold those officers accountable."

The sentence was handed down by U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken. The Court sentenced Harris to five years probation, with requirements that he serve six months in a halfway house and the following six months in home detention. The Court sentenced Thomas to three years probation, with a requirement that he serve six months home detention. Both defendants were also ordered to perform 250 hours of community service. Both defendants are out of custody. Harris was ordered to report to the halfway house immediately, Thomas's period of home detention also started immediately.

Susan Badger and Hartley West are the Assistant U.S. Attorneys who prosecuted the case with the assistance of Rosario Calderon and Rhanian Ghawi. The prosecution is the result of a seven month

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investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

(Harris & Thomas Indictment )

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