

Fayetteville Man Pleads Guilty to Possession of Stolen Firearm Intended for Use in Terrorist Activities

U.S. Attorney's Office May 14, 2013

Eastern District of North Carolina (919) 856-4530

GREENVILLE—United States Attorney Thomas G. Walker announced that in federal court today, Erwin Antonio Rios, a 19-year-old resident of Fayetteville, North Carolina, pled guilty in front of United States Magistrate Judge James E. Gates to possession of a stolen firearm in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(j).

“Erwin Rios intended to commit violent acts against innocent people in furtherance of his extremist doctrine of hate. As demonstrated in this case, the multi-agency partnerships which make up our local Joint Terrorism Task Force continue to play a critical role in the day-to-day protection of our communities and our national security,” said John Strong, Special Agent in Charge of the Charlotte Division of the FBI.

On February 7, 2013, a criminal complaint was issued that charged Rios with the above offense. According to the investigation, Rios is a self-proclaimed adherent to the extremist views found within radical Islam. Rios desired to travel overseas in order to further what he termed “jihad” and expressly defined as various forms of violence against those he determined to be non-believers—to include U.S. forces. In order to obtain the funds necessary for such travel, Rios devised a scheme to commit violent robberies within North Carolina. He intended to leave no witnesses alive in order to better secure success. As an initial step, Rios sought out a firearm and expressed willingness to purchase a stolen hand gun. The FBI subsequently provided Rios with the opportunity to purchase a purportedly stolen hand gun through a confidential informant. Rios eagerly provided the funds for purchase of a weapon he believed to be stolen. Immediately afterwards, Rios was taken into custody.

Investigation of this case was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorney, Jason M. Kellhofer, represented the government.