



## OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**KEVIN R. STEELE**

DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**EDWARD F. McCANN, JR.**

FIRST ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

### COUNTY OF MONTGOMERY

COURTHOUSE

P.O. BOX 311

NORRISTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

19404-0311

**MARK A. BERNSTIEL**

CHIEF COUNTY DETECTIVE

**JESSE S. KING**

CHIEF OF STAFF

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE**

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S FAX**

**COUNTY DETECTIVE BUREAU**

**(610) 278-3090**

**(610) 278-3095**

**(610) 278-3368**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **DA, ATF ANNOUNCE ARREST OF FORMER PHILADELPHIA CORRECTIONAL OFFICER ON GUN TRAFFICKING CHARGES**



**AMANDA BARR**

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (March 11, 2022) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Matthew P. Varisco, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Department of Justice, Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' (ATF) Philadelphia Field Division, announce the arrest of Amanda Barr, 37, of Trevoise, Pa., on multiple felony charges related to the straw purchasing and trafficking of five firearms. The criminal offenses occurred when Barr was employed as a Corrections Officer for the City of Philadelphia.

The investigation by the Montgomery County Detective Bureau's Violent Crimes Unit (VCU), ATF and multiple federal, state and local partners into Barr's gun trafficking activity began after two of the firearms she purchased were found in the possession of individuals who, due to previous felony convictions, were unable to legally purchase or carry a firearm—which is indicative of straw purchasing.

A "straw purchase" is when a person with a clean background purchases firearms specifically on behalf of another person to conceal the true ownership of the firearm. Persons who are unable to legally purchase a firearm would include convicted felons, domestic violence misdemeanants, juveniles and mentally ill individuals.

VCU detectives investigated Barr's firearms by going through hard copies of ATF and Pennsylvania State Police purchasing forms at gun stores. The investigation found that from December 16, 2018 to March 23, 2019, Barr purchased seven firearms during this 98-day period. Six of the seven firearms were purchased at gun shows at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks, Pa., in Montgomery County. Barr reported two of the firearms she purchased as stolen two weeks after their purchase in February 2018, but the other five were no longer in her possession

On Nov. 23, 2021, ATF agents interviewed Barr—who at the time was employed as a Corrections Officer in Philadelphia—about her firearms purchases and recovery of two of those guns in the hands of persons not to possess a firearm. (Following the interview with the ATF, Barr resigned her CO position.) Further investigation by ATF and MCDB found that Barr had illegally sold the firearms on a social media platform, then met with the prospective buyers in person to complete the illegal sales.

Two firearms have been recovered by Philadelphia Police in the possession of individuals unable to legally possess a gun:

- On Dec. 30, 2020, Philadelphia Police recovered a GSG .22 caliber semi-automatic handgun when they arrested Terrelle Johnson on charges related to a shooting that happened earlier in the month. The firearm was purchased on Jan. 7, 2018 by Barr at a gun store in Philadelphia. Johnson was not allowed to legally possess a firearm.
- On Feb. 23, 2021, Philadelphia Police recovered a loaded Taurus 9mm semi-automatic handgun during a traffic stop, concealed in the pants of the driver. The gun was purchased on March 23, 2019 by Barr. The driver was not allowed to legally possess a firearm.

The partner investigation by ATF and Montgomery County Detectives was assisted by the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General's Gun Violence Task Force, Philadelphia Police Department, Bensalem Township Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Bucks and Montgomery County Safe Streets Task Force.

"Buying and trafficking firearms to criminals is always a threat to public safety and is an egregious crime," said DA Steele. "We have firearms laws for a reason—and one of the biggest is to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and keep our communities safe. Law enforcement at all levels is committed to working together to fight the arming of criminals through these illegal straw purchases and gun trafficking."

ATF's Special Agent in Charge Varisco pointed out the danger of straw purchasing activity. "Straw purchasers and firearms traffickers enable violence," said Varisco. "The partnership between local, state and federal law enforcement is vitally important in preventing violent crime and reducing the danger caused by firearm trafficking activities. I would like to thank the Montgomery County Detective Bureau and the District Attorney's Office for their diligent work in this investigation."

Barr was arrested on charges of Unlawful Sale/Transfer of a Firearm, Dealing in the Proceeds of Unlawful Activities, Materially False Statements to Authorities and related charges. She was arraigned before Magisterial District Judge Patricia A. Zaffarano, who

set bail at \$500,000 cash. The defendant was unable to post bail and was remanded to the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 9 a.m., March 29, 2022 before Magisterial District Judge Cathleen Kelly Rebar.

The case will be prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney William Highland.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

*CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.*