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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Missouri Man Sentenced for Bringing Firearms to 2020 Kenosha Unrest

Gregory J. Haanstad, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, announced that on December 29, 2022, United States District Judge J.P. Stadtmueller sentenced Michael Karmo (42), of Hartsville, Missouri, to 64 months in federal prison for unlawfully possessing firearms despite a prior felony conviction. Karmo, who had entered a guilty plea to the offense earlier this year, also will spend two years on supervised release following his prison term.

Court filings reflect the following. During the Summer of 2020, Karmo became intrigued by unrest taking place in various cities. On July 1, 2020, he texted a friend, "[A]ll I care about is f**king up antifa and black lives matters mother f**kers these days." He indicated that he had been "driving back and forth across America going to where they be rioting the hardest." On August 31, 2020, Karmo and a friend decided to drive from Missouri to the scene of unrest in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Before leaving, Karmo took a photo of himself and his friend holding long guns and sent the photo to a woman in Iowa. Karmo also sent the woman a photo of a firearm with a large drum that he called the "game changer." After Karmo and his friend stopped to see the woman in Iowa, she became concerned and called the police. FBI agents later arrested Karmo and his friend in Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin. At the time, Karmo and his friend were in possession of an AR-15 assault rifle, a 12-gauge shotgun, two 9mm handguns, 67 rounds of 9mm ammunition, 131 shotgun shells, what appeared to be a homemade silencer, multiple high-capacity magazines, a firearm muzzle attachment, a drone, body armor, tactical gear, a dagger, a confederate flag, and other items.

Court filings indicate that Karmo's phone contained videos in which Karmo: (1) detailed the firearms he had brought to Kenosha; (2) talked about being on the streets "when the thugs come out"; (3) stated that he would be ready to act if the police and National Guard were not "handling business"; (4) referred to protestors as "a bunch of victims"; and (5) indicated a desire to "lay out" a protestor chanting "Justice for Jacob Blake."

This case was investigated by the FBI, with assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF), the Kenosha Police Department, the Village of Pleasant Prairie Police Department, the Kenosha County Sheriff's Office, the Kenosha County District Attorney's Office, and the Waverly (Iowa) Police Department. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Richard G. Frohling and Margaret B. Honrath.

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