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OFFICIALS OFFER PLAN TO
CUT THEFTS FROM GUN
SHIPMENTS**By Jennifer Peltz**
Tribune Staff Writer
January 17, 2000

Between April and July last year, at least 35 brand-new guns were stolen as they sat in boxcars in the city's South Side rail yards, waiting to be shipped to dealers, Chicago police and prosecutors say.

Only six of the weapons have been recovered--all in the hands of people with criminal records, according to Michael Smith, Cook County's lead gang-crimes prosecutor. A gun stolen in a separate incident was involved in the accidental death of a 4-year-old Chicago boy in July, said State's Attorney Richard Devine at a press conference Sunday.

And that may have been just the tip of the iceberg. Devine said as many as 1,200 more guns may have been stolen in the Chicago area. Devine said investigators believe the theft happened in June, but he was unable to offer details because, he said, investigators have been unable to get records of the shipment.

Pointing to these incidents and others elsewhere, U.S. Rep. Rod Blagojevich (D-Illinois) is calling for more security and better record-keeping on guns in transit.

"You can argue back and forth about gun control, but no one can defend the kind of thing that happens here," Blagojevich said.

Shipping companies transport an estimated 5 million guns a year from manufacturers to dealers. Officials say they are not sure how many weapons disappear along the way because the thefts are not always reported.

Blagojevich is proposing to create penalties for manufacturers, dealers and shipping companies that fail to report thefts and to lengthen sentences for those convicted of committing them.

He also wants to require shipping companies to conduct criminal background checks on any employee handling firearms and to send all firearms by overnight air delivery, instead of by rail or truck.

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by overnight air delivery, instead of by rail or truck.

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UPS, which handles an estimated 80 percent of commercial firearms shipping, imposed the requirement last fall after three employees were charged with stealing 29 handguns from a distribution center in Maryland.

Blagojevich said he was not sure how much his proposals would cost shippers, manufacturers or gun buyers. Representatives of UPS, the National Rifle Association and the Illinois State Rifle Association could not be reached for comment Sunday.

As Blagojevich spoke at Chicago's Daley Center, congressional hopeful Andrew Hochberg unveiled a gun-control proposal outside a firearms show in north suburban Grayslake.

Hochberg is a former chief executive officer of Sportmart, which sells firearms in some of its stores. Now a Republican candidate for the 10th District seat that U.S. Rep. John Porter is vacating, he called for imposing the same requirements on individuals who occasionally sell guns as on dealers who are in the business of selling firearms.

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WEB SPECIALS



Jelly Roll blues

SOME POLITICIANS NOT
AFRAID TO GET PERSONALBy William Neikirk, Washington Bureau. Mike
Dorning of the Tribune's Washington Bureau and
Mark Stricherz of States...

January 16, 2000

WASHINGTON -- Rep. Rod Blagojevich (D-Ill.) supports gun-control legislation. He grew up in a neighborhood where violence with firearms was a daily concern, and he also dealt with the issue as a prosecutor and as a state legislator before being elected to Congress.

But he favors federal restraints on guns for another reason: He has been held up twice, once in the Austin neighborhood when he was a 22-year-old pizza deliveryman and again in the mid-1980s when he and a date were leaving a Humboldt Park restaurant.

Both incidents made a deep impression. In the second, the gunman pointed the weapon at him and demanded his date's purse. "I was quick and valiant," Blagojevich said. "I said to her, 'Why don't you give him your purse?' " It contained \$7.

The gunman did not ask for Blagojevich's wallet, which contained \$35. He figures he came out ahead: That is, alive, and ready to announce new gun legislation on Sunday.

Certainly, politics drives members of Congress like Blagojevich to support certain agendas, and it would be naive to suggest otherwise. But the impression that everything in politics is poll-driven may be a bit overstated. Vivid experience and personal preference also play a larger role than many would be inclined to believe.

Biggest role: Rep. Judy Biggert (R-Ill.) is a member of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans, a bipartisan group formed to "represent the more than one million Asian Indians living in America, as well as strengthening U.S.-India ties." She said that, as a member of the school board in Hinsdale, she discovered many Indian-Americans in the school system, lured to the city by jobs.

In addition, her experience in education also has led her to support reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act this year. She said she learned

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Against Women Act this year. She said she learned as a school board member that children from homes where the mother was abused did not perform as well and were denied the kind of early childhood education that so many experts now believe is crucial to development.

In the same vein, she sponsored a bill to assist in the education of homeless children, which has passed the House.

Help for Africa: Sen. Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) is just back from South Africa, Uganda and Kenya, fired up to push for more money to deal with the AIDS epidemic, food assistance and small loans to help poor people on that continent.

The senator said he was struck by how all three countries are dealing differently with the AIDS issue. While Uganda has made progress over the last decade and Kenya is at least waking up to the problem, he said South Africa "is in total denial. There is no public health program, no policy. A woman in one village who admitted she had AIDS was stoned to death."

Durbin described a visit he made to a remote health clinic in South Africa. A widow at the clinic told him that she had heart problems and tuberculosis, and now has AIDS. "I have no idea what will happen to my children," she told the senator as she wept.

The senator said he put his arm around her. "There was a gasp from the entire audience, just because I touched her," he said. "The doctor said to them, 'Look, the senator touched her. You won't die if you touch her.'"

Uganda, not South Africa, will get the bulk of U.S. funds to deal with the AIDS issue simply because that country has a policy, the senator said.

Cost of marriage: Rep. Jerry Weller (R-Ill.), who is divorced, has taken one of the lead roles in the House in pushing for elimination of the marriage penalty, the No. 1 issue of GOP leaders this year. Weller said he began pushing for the legislation in 1994, when a woman campaign worker who had just gotten engaged told him that she was going to have to pay higher taxes when she got married.

Just like a dad: Sen. Peter Fitzgerald (R-Ill.) has put his feelings as a father ahead of party politics in the matter of 6-year-old Elian Gonzalez, the Cuban boy found floating on an inner tube off the Florida coast on Thanksgiving Day. Elian's mother and stepfather died at sea during their attempt to escape Cuba. The child has been caught in a politically charged battle over whether he should stay in the United States with relatives or be returned to his father and grandparents in Cuba.

Despite many Republicans' insistence that Elian

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Despite many Republicans' insistence that Elian should grow up in freedom, not be sent back to a Communist country, Fitzgerald said if he were living in Cuba, he would not want to send his 7-year-old son, Jake, away from him to the U.S. "I would want my son with me wherever I was," he said.

New chief of staff: Dave Stricklin, a native of Carbondale who worked for Glenn Poshard's congressional office for 10 years and in Poshard's unsuccessful gubernatorial campaign, is Blagojevich's new chief of staff.

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**LEGISLATION
TO BE OFFERED
IN THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
BY U.S. REP. ROD BLAGOJEVICH**

Under current law, there are no tracking or security requirements for gun shipments, making it easy for criminals to steal guns during shipment without the carrier's knowledge of when and where the theft occurred.

We need to tighten restrictions and require that all gun shipments are transported in a secure and theft-proof manner.

To that end, Congressman Blagojevich's legislation would:

- *Require all private shipping carriers -- including the U.S. Postal Service -- to track and immediately report all gun thefts that occur during the shipping process.

- *Require overnight air delivery when shipping firearms.

- *Require commercial shipment carriers to conduct criminal background checks on any employee that will handle firearms shipments.

- *Impose stiffer penalties on people convicted of gun thefts from interstate carriers. A minimum of 5 years and up to 20 years of incarceration would be the penalty for violations of this statute. Current law has no minimum sentences and the maximum only goes up to 10 years.

- *Impose civil penalties for any gun dealers, carriers, manufacturers or wholesalers who fail to report loss or theft of guns to law enforcement. Current law imposes no penalties.

METRO

■ *Blagojevich, Devine seek tighter rules for transporting firearms.*

Trains tempting for gun thieves

BY MAUREEN O'DONNELL
STAFF REPORTER

Weapons stolen from a South Side railyard that later wound up in street gang arsenals prompted a call Sunday for stricter transportation of firearms.

One of the stolen guns killed a 4-year-old Chicago boy whose relative stored it at his home last summer, said Cook County State's Attorney Richard A. Devine and U.S. Rep. Rod Blagojevich (D-Ill.), who announced a push Sunday to tighten up lax gun transportation.

But there is no way to determine the accuracy of a June 1999 report from a railroad security officer of a single theft of 1,200 weapons from the trouble-prone railyard at 63rd Street and Indiana Avenue, they said. That's because United Parcel Service was unable to provide records about the shipment, Devine said.

Chicago remains a rail hub, and "idle boxcars in desolate railyards are like sitting ducks in the dead of night," Blagojevich said.

At least 37 firearms were stolen

in 1998 and 1999 in a string of thefts from UPS trailers at the railyard and in one incident at UPS' Hodgkins hub.

"It's a major source of illegal weapons," said Mike Smith, head of the state's attorney's gang crimes unit. "How many? We have no idea."

Blagojevich said he would introduce a bill that would: require tracking of gun shipments by private delivery services and the U.S. mail; mandate overnight air delivery of firearms, burglar-proof shipping containers and reporting of thefts; require more stringent background checks for delivery-service workers in contact with firearms, and stiffen jail terms for gun thefts from interstate carriers.

UPS "recently required that all shipments of handguns go through our air system so that none of them are transported on the ground any longer" as a result of discussions with law enforcement, spokesman Mike Johl said.

However, "long guns" are still being shipped by rail, Devine said.

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Chicago Tribune, Monday, January 17, 2000

Section 2 3

Officials offer plan to cut thefts from gun shipments

By Jennifer Peitz
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Between April and July last year, at least 35 brand-new guns were stolen as they sat in boxcars in the city's South Side rail yards, waiting to be shipped to dealers, Chicago police and prosecutors say.

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Top doctor pushes healthy living

By Margaret O'Brien
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher told Chicago State University students during a commencement address Sunday that they must make good decisions in youth to ensure health and quality of life in later years.

Satcher accepted an honorary degree from the South Side school and used the opportunity to push his healthy lifestyle agenda to the 650 graduates and their families.

"I try to use this bully pulpit to talk about what we need to do for ourselves in terms of lifestyle," Satcher said, handing out "prescriptions" for physical activity five days a week, responsible sexual behavior and avoidance of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. "I'm here to challenge these students to make good choices."

Since he was nominated by President Clinton to the nation's

Disease Control and Prevention, has pledged to use his post for straight talk about diet and exercise.

But Sunday, Satcher also emphasized the need for the destigmatization of mental illness and for additional research and programs designed to end inequalities in the overall health of different racial groups.

"For all the medical breakthroughs we have seen in the past century, we still see significant disparities in the medical conditions of racial groups in this country," Satcher said. "We must put an end to that."

Satcher pointed to disproportionately high rates of diabetes among American Indians; prostate cancer and cardiovascular disease among African-American men; cervical cancer among Vietnamese and Hispanic women; and high infant mortality statistics among African-Americans.

understand all the reasons they exist. We need to do new research," he said.

Satcher mentioned one recent study that showed that treatment decisions were influenced by the race and gender of the patient. "We need research that will identify these types of issues and help us address them," he said.

Satcher said he is working to establish model communities in 32 U.S. cities that will study infant mortality, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and immunization. Satcher said he hopes the models will develop solutions that can be applied throughout the country.

While it wouldn't solve the disparity problem, Satcher said, universal access to insurance and health care would help.

"The United States and South Africa are the only two industrialized countries without universal



Tribune by Peter Thompson

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Gun Thefts Put UPS in the Cross Hairs

By Craig Whitlock
Washington Post Staff Writer
Friday, December 24, 1999; Page A01

Even the men convicted of stealing guns from the United Parcel Service distribution center in Landover were surprised by how easy it was to pick them off the conveyor belt and get them out of the building.

They started cautiously, slicing open cardboard boxes addressed to a Prince George's County gun shop, removing one or two handguns and taking them out by hiding them under their clothes.

When nothing happened, the three UPS cargo handlers—one of them a convicted crack dealer—grew bolder, according to affidavits filed in U.S. District Court in Greenbelt. They grabbed entire packages filled with revolvers and semiautomatic pistols, slapped on new address labels and had their employer deliver them home for free.

Before they were arrested by federal agents in March and April, the three UPS workers stole 29 handguns and sold them on the streets for \$250 to \$350. One of the firearms was used in an armed carjacking less than 36 hours after it was stolen from a UPS shipment. Only eight have been recovered.

Authorities say the UPS case illustrates how—despite increasingly strict controls on gun sales to individuals—package delivery firms, where security is often lax, often are an easy target for criminals intent on obtaining weapons.

"Criminals are going to go to the path of least resistance," said Mike Campbell, a spokesman in the Baltimore office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, which investigated the UPS thefts. "They are going to find whatever way they can to get the guns. So if they can find somebody on the inside to help them, they will."

In 1998, 941 firearms were reported stolen from interstate shipments, most of them from commercial carriers such as UPS, according to ATF figures. But federal officials concede that they have no idea how many of the estimated 5 million guns that are shipped each year by commercial carrier are stolen.

Licensed gun dealers and manufacturers are required by federal law to report all firearms thefts to the ATF, but there is no such requirement for package delivery companies. Some carriers report gun thefts voluntarily, but ATF declined to provide a breakdown on losses reported by each company.

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"Theft from interstate shipments has always been a problem because there are such large numbers of guns being sent," said Jeffrey R. Roehm, an ATF spokesman in Washington.

Roehm said UPS "has been overwhelmingly cooperative" with investigators and has assisted in numerous undercover operations. But he added that it can be difficult to sniff out gun thieves in the company's sprawling shipping network.

In general, firearms can be shipped only to licensed dealers, manufacturers and wholesalers. To deter thefts, federal law dictates that packages containing guns must be shipped in plain wrappers that bear no indication of their contents.

About 80 percent of the guns shipped in the United States move through UPS. The U.S. Postal Service is legally barred from shipping handguns through the mail, although it can deliver shotguns and rifles for licensed dealers.

UPS spokesman Bob Godlewski said "several hundred" guns are stolen from the Atlanta-based company each year, although he declined to be specific.

Many of the thefts in the UPS system, big and small, have proved to be inside jobs plotted by employees.

* In August, a UPS employee from Charles County was indicted on federal charges of possessing a stolen handgun and crack cocaine after he was shot during an altercation with two ATF agents who were trying to interview him in a firearms trafficking case. Federal authorities say the man, Anthony Gray, 20, of Waldorf, and another UPS worker stole three guns from the company's Waldorf distribution center in July.

* In 1992, a UPS driver from Alexandria was charged with stealing more than 850 handguns from his route and selling them to finance his crack-cocaine business. Many of the firearms were shipped via UPS by Interarms Inc., of Alexandria, one of the world's largest gun dealerships. The driver, Bernard G. Fuller, was sentenced to 12 1/2 years in prison without parole.

In October, after the thefts from its Landover distribution center, UPS changed its rules and now requires all handguns to be sent by next-day-air service, the form of delivery also required by Federal Express Corp. and Airborne Freight Corp.

That method allows packages to be tracked more closely and reduces the time they are sitting around, making them less vulnerable to thieves, according to UPS officials. Rifles and shotguns, however, can still be sent by standard ground delivery, which is cheaper.

But some gun dealers criticized UPS, saying the company has forced them to pay more to have guns delivered overnight but has done little else to improve security.

"They're punishing us for their incompetence," said Sanford Abrams, owner of Valley Guns in Towson and vice president of the Maryland

Licensed Firearms Dealers Association. "We're livid that we have to pay for UPS's inefficiency and lack of security. They should secure their facilities and check the backgrounds of their employees to make sure they aren't hiring criminals."

Godlewski, the UPS spokesman, said the change was made "to minimize the risk, even though it might be more expensive for the consumer."

"In the end, it's this game of trying to keep guns out of the bad guys' hands and limiting the number of people who have access to them."

He said he did not know how many guns have been stolen since the policy went into effect, but he acknowledged that the new system is not foolproof. "If somebody really wants to get in there, they'll get in there," he said.

Indeed, ATF agents and local authorities are still looking for the culprit who stole six handguns in late October from a UPS distribution center in Ventura, Calif. The weapons, which were sent in accordance with UPS's new rules, were addressed to a gun dealership called Shooters Paradise.

George Rice, the owner, said that over the past two years, 70 guns being shipped to his two stores through UPS have not been delivered. He criticized the company's security division as slow and lackadaisical.

"The people they have checking [the problem], I don't think they could catch anybody if they did it right in front of them," he said. "They would never follow through. Every time I contacted them, it was like, 'Oh, it's no big deal.' It's asinine! Everybody knows the guns are all going right to the streets, to the gangs."

U.S. Attorney Lynne A. Battaglia said the UPS case in Landover was the biggest federal gun-trafficking investigation in Maryland in years.

"It was of major significance to us," she said. "The sole purpose of getting these guns on the street was to put them in the hands of criminals. The fact that you had so many guns out there, it brings up people's greatest fears."

Battaglia said she met with UPS officials last summer to discuss ways to prevent thefts. She praised the company's new shipping policy for guns. "I was amazed at how responsive they were," she said.

UPS says it aggressively investigates all reports of stolen or missing firearms.

But the local gun dealer whose shipments were stolen at Landover said he also had trouble getting UPS to investigate the missing weapons.

According to documents filed in federal court, the thieves at the UPS distribution center at 8325 Ardwick-Ardmore Rd. began discreetly, taking a gun or two at a time, spaced several days apart.

The first gun—a Smith & Wesson .357-caliber revolver—was taken on Feb. 18, when a box addressed to Maryland Small Arms, an Upper Marlboro gun dealer, vanished from the premises.

Eight days later, a UPS driver delivered another package to Maryland Small Arms that had been sent by Springfield, Mass.-based Smith & Wesson. The gun dealer refused the package, because the box had been tampered with. Two 9mm semiautomatic pistols were later determined to be missing, according to court records.

Three UPS package loaders—Darris Marlon Banks, 19, of Temple Hills; Carlos Ramon Jones, 28, of Landover, and Anthony Rondell Barnett, 28, of Lothian—have been convicted in the weapon thefts. All worked the overnight shift at Landover, making \$10.75 an hour.

Banks was the first to figure out that packages addressed to Maryland Small Arms contained firearms and that they were easy to steal, according to court records. He tipped off Barnett, who pulled Jones into the scheme.

On March 3, according to affidavits filed by the ATF, Banks grabbed a box off the conveyor belt and carried it into the back of a brown UPS delivery truck on the loading line. All three men jumped inside, where Banks sliced open the package and pulled out four Smith & Wesson semiautomatic pistols.

Banks handed the weapons to Barnett, who in turn gave them to Jones, according to court records. Jones took off his jacket and stuffed the guns in the sleeves so he could sneak them out of the building. The workers re-sealed the empty package. Later that morning, it was delivered to Maryland Small Arms.

Carl Roy, a manager at the store, said employees called UPS several times about the gun thefts but couldn't get the company to respond.

"UPS wouldn't do anything," he said. "We complained and complained, but they wouldn't even come out to take a report."

Meantime, the thieves grew more brazen. On March 19, they stuck a new address label on a package containing 10 Smith & Wesson .357-caliber revolvers and had the whole shipment delivered to Banks's home in Temple Hills, according to court records. On March 24, they did the same thing to a box of nine Beretta semiautomatic pistols that had been ordered by Maryland Small Arms.

Authorities say the thieves resold the guns quickly on the street for about \$300 on average, a hefty discount from their suggested retail prices of \$450 to \$650.

One of the 9mm semiautomatic pistols that was stolen on Feb. 26 was used less than 36 hours later in a carjacking in Temple Hills, records show. Police say Dante Devon Hamm, 20, of the 2500 block of St. Claire Drive in Temple Hills, stole a 1994 Lexus ES 300 at gunpoint from Johnny's Sub Shop on Iverson Street, D.C., police spotted the car a few hours later and arrested Hamm at the wheel.

According to authorities, Hamm bought the pistol from Banks, his

longtime neighbor and friend. Hamm has pleaded guilty to federal charges of carjacking and use of a handgun in a crime of violence. He is to be sentenced Jan. 10.

Another gun stolen from the UPS distribution center surfaced on May 25, when Prince George's police arrested Kenneth Vincent Francis, 22, of the 2400 block of Iverson Street in Temple Hills, and charged him with possession of cocaine and marijuana, according to authorities.

Police say Francis was carrying a Beretta .45-caliber semiautomatic pistol. He later told ATF agents he had bought the gun in early April for \$350 from a convicted cocaine dealer who had acquired the firearm from Banks.

The UPS gun theft ring was broken up in late March, when ATF agents obtained a search warrant and found two of the stolen weapons at Banks's home in Temple Hills. Banks later cooperated with investigators under a limited-immunity agreement and provided information that led to the arrests of Jones and Barnett.

Banks pleaded guilty to one count of possessing stolen firearms and is awaiting sentencing in federal court. Jones pleaded guilty to the same charge and was sentenced to 30 months in prison. Barnett pleaded guilty to one count of theft of firearms and was sentenced to four months in prison.

Records also show that Jones had a long criminal history before he was hired by UPS in May 1997. He was convicted of manufacturing and distributing cocaine in November 1990, according to Prince George's County Circuit Court records. Four years later, he was charged with first-degree murder in what prosecutors described as a "drug-related homicide." The charge was dropped when two witnesses refused to testify, court records show.

Godlewski, the UPS spokesman, said the company conducts background checks of all job applicants. But he acknowledged that some criminals slip by.

"UPS believes that most people are honest," he said. "Are bad apples going to get through? Absolutely."

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