

ATLANTIC COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

4997 Unami Boulevard, Mays Landing, NJ 08330

Theodore F. L. Housel
Prosecutor

NEWS RELEASE

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For further information contact:
Madelaine Vitale 609-909 -7855
or 609-457-7359

MAYS LANDING – A Hamilton Township man was sentenced to 22 years in prison for the May 13, 2008 fatal shooting of a man he had thought of as a friend, one whom he spent time with at his home with the victim's fiancé and children,

Leonard Ford, 29, told the court prior to Superior Court Judge James E. Isman imposing the prison term that Troy Cottman, 33, was his friend and apologized to the family.

Cottman, the father of two girls ages 5 and 8, died from a gunshot wound to the head in his Oakcrest Estates residence in Hamilton Township.

Ford entered a guilty plea to aggravated manslaughter on March 30 recommending a sentence on which he must serve 85 percent of the 22 –year prison term. He admitted at the hearing that he killed his friend.

“He took good care of his kids,” Cottman's fiancé said through tears “No one can understand the feelings I have every day. My kids go through it every day.”

Judge Isman told the court that gun violence has got to stop. He spoke of the days when people settled disputes with fists. Now they use guns.

“Apparently this is how Mr. Ford resolves issues,” Judge Isman said. “He carries a loaded gun. “The doggone guns have to be put away. We're not at war, at least not in this country. We're not a militia.”

Chief Assistant Prosecutor Chet Wiech stated, “The most difficult part of being a prosecutor for 22 years, having tried numerous homicide cases is setting aside my personal anger that comes from knowing the anguish inflicted upon the victim's family, while objectively evaluating the case so as to get the most prison time allowed by law.”

Cottman was discovered in an apartment in the Hamilton Township complex. Police received a 911 call at 4:30 p.m. the day of the killing for a report of shots fired at an apartment on Anglesey Court in Oakcrest Estates, located off Cologne Avenue.

Members of the Prosecutor's Office Major Crimes Unit responded at 5 p.m. on May 13, 2008, moments after they received the call from the Hamilton Township Police Department.

Cottman was pronounced dead at the scene. An autopsy determined that the victim died from a single gunshot wound to the head.

Ford, of Brecknock Court, was arrested without incident shortly after the crime. An Atlantic County Grand Jury indicted him on Oct. 7, 2008 on multiple counts including murder and weapons offenses. All other charges were dismissed as part of the plea agreement.

Anyone with information involving serious crimes is asked to call the Atlantic County Prosecutor's Office at 609-909-7800 or go to the Prosecutor's Office Web site at <http://www.acpo.org/tips.html> and provide information by filling out the form anonymously on the Submit a Tip page. People can also call Crime Stoppers at 609-652-1234 or 1-800-658-8477 (TIPS). Crime Stoppers offers cash rewards for information leading to the arrest and indictment of those who commit crimes in Atlantic County.