

# Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Michael W. Reap  
Eastern District of Missouri

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For Immediate Release

## **FIVE MEN CHARGED, OVER 150 DOGS SEIZED IN DOG FIGHTING RINGS**

St. Louis, MO: Officers from multiple federal and state law enforcement agencies arrested five Missouri men and seized more than 150 Pit Bull Terriers in an early morning raid on several locations involved in dog fighting ventures, Acting United States Attorney Michael W. Reap announced today.

The U.S. Attorney also filed motions seeking to take legal ownership of the dogs and place the animals in the care and custody of the Humane Society of Missouri. Under federal law, the government can take custody of any animals engaged in any animal fighting venture. Additionally, the U.S. Attorney is seeking a court order requiring the defendants to reimburse the Humane Society of Missouri for all costs incurred for care of the animals while the animals are in their custody.

According to the indictment between January 2008 and June 2009, Michael Morgan, Robert Hackman, Teddy Kiriakidis, Ronald Creach and Jack Ruppel were involved in animal fighting ventures and dog fighting competitions. They established and ran various kennel operations to purchase, breed, train, condition, and develop Pit Bull Terriers for participation in the animal fighting ventures, Robert Hackman operated "Shake Rattle and Roll Kennel," Jack Ruppel operated "Ozark Hillbillys Kennel," Michael Morgan a/k/a "Missouri Mike" operated "Cannibal Kennel," and Ronald Creach operated "Hard Goodbye Kennel."

The indictment alleges that the defendants routinely inhumanely abandoned, destroyed, and otherwise disposed of Pit Bull Terriers that lost fighting competitions, did not perform aggressively enough, or that became injured, wounded, or disabled as a result of participating in an animal fighting ventures.

*In addition to the indictment unsealed today in the Eastern District of Missouri, 21 defendants were also charged in separate cases arising from the same investigation in the Western District of Missouri, the Southern District of Illinois and the Eastern District of Texas.*

*Headed by the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Inspector General, this dog fighting investigation is the latest in a series of major animal fighting investigations conducted throughout the country since the passage*

*of the Animal Fighting Prohibition Enforcement Act, signed into law in May 2007, which makes it a felony to participate in the blood sport.*

*“As evidenced through this and other recent investigations, animal fighting activities exist throughout the state and the country,” said Special Agent-in-Charge James L. Mendenhall. “The OIG will continue to pursue substantive allegations of animal fighting, and is committed to work in concert with other federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to that end.”*

*“We are pleased with the success of this lengthy and thorough investigation, stated Colonel James F. Keathley, Superintendent of the Missouri State Highway Patrol. Undercover officers from within the Patrol's Division of Drug and Crime Control along with the other state and federal agencies should be commended for their dedication and continued hard work in our concerted efforts to stop animal fighting.”*

*“The Humane Society of Missouri provided initial information that led to this investigation. During the course of the investigation they also cared for animals involved when possible, and they are presently designated to provide continuing care for the seized dogs,” said Acting United States Attorney Michael Reap.*

*“Forcing a dog to fight to its death is not a sport,” said John V. Gillies, Special Agent in Charge of the St. Louis office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). “There is nothing respectable about encouraging two animals to torture and dismember each other. Individuals who participate in dog fighting claim to care for the animals, but they don't hesitate to electrocute their helpless dog once it loses a fight and can no longer provide any financial benefit.”*

**Indicted in the Eastern District of Missouri:**

**Michael Morgan, a/k/a Missouri Mike, 38, Hannibal, MO, on two felony counts of conspiracy to**

commit federal offenses and one felony count of prohibitions against animal fighting ventures;  
Robert Hackman, 55, Foley, MO, two felony counts of conspiracy to commit federal offenses  
and two felony counts of prohibitions against animal fighting ventures;  
Teddy Kiriakidis, a/k/a Teddy Bogart, 50, Leasburg, MO, one felony count of conspiracy to  
commit federal offenses;  
Ronald Creach, 34, Leslie, MO, one felony count of conspiracy to commit federal offenses; and  
Jack Ruppel, 35 Eldon, MO, town, two felony counts of conspiracy to commit federal offenses  
and two felony counts of prohibitions against animal fighting ventures.

If convicted, each count of the indictment carries a maximum penalty of five years in prison  
and/or fines up to \$250,000.

Reap commended the work on the case by the Missouri State Highway Patrol , the Humane  
Society of Missouri, the United States Department of Agriculture Office of Inspector General;  
the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Assistant United States Attorneys Matthew Drake,  
Charlie Birmingham and Julie Wright who are handling the cases for the U.S. Attorney's Office.

The charges set forth in an indictment are merely accusations, and each defendant is presumed  
innocent until and unless proven guilty.