

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA
WESTERN DIVISION**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff, vs. CHRISTIAN KELLY, Defendant.	25-CR-50149-CCT FINAL INSTRUCTIONS TO THE JURY
--	--

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 1 – INTRODUCTION	1
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 2 – POSSESSION OF A FIREARM BY A PROHIBITED PERSON.....	2
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 3 – POSSESSION OF AN UNREGISTERED FIREARM	4
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 4 – POSSESSION	6
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 5 – JUSTIFICATION	7
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 6 – KNOWLEDGE AND INTENT	9
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 7 – IMPEACHMENT.....	10
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 8 – IMPEACHMENT BY PRIOR CONVICTION.....	11
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 9 – DEFENDANT’S PRIOR SIMILAR ACTS	12
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 10 – EXPERT WITNESS.....	13
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 11 – PRESUMPTION OF INNOCENCE AND BURDEN OF PROOF	14
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 12 – REASONABLE DOUBT	15
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 13 – DUTY TO DELIBERATE	16
FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 14 – DUTY DURING DELIBERATIONS.....	17

VERDICT FORM

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 1 – INTRODUCTION

Members of the jury, the written instructions I gave you at the beginning of the trial remain in effect. I now give you some additional instructions.

The instructions I am about to give you, as well as the preliminary instructions given to you at the beginning of the trial, are in writing and will be available to you in the jury room. *All* instructions, whenever given and whether in writing or not, must be followed. This is true even though some of the instructions I gave you at the beginning of the trial are not repeated here.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 2 – POSSESSION OF A FIREARM BY A PROHIBITED
PERSON

For you to find Christian Kelly guilty of “possession of a firearm by a prohibited person” as charged in Count 1 of the Indictment, the government must prove the following essential elements beyond a reasonable doubt:

One, that Christian Kelly had been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for more than one year;

The parties have stipulated that Christian Kelly has been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for more than one year under the laws of the United States, and you must consider this first element as proven.

By entering into this agreement or stipulation, Christian Kelly has not admitted his guilt of the offense charged, and you may not draw an inference of guilt from the stipulation. The only effect of this stipulation is to establish the fact that Christian Kelly has been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year before June 20, 2025.

Two, after that conviction, on or about between June 20, 2025, and June 21, 2025, Christian Kelly knowingly possessed a firearm, that is a Weatherby, model Vanguard, .223 Remington caliber, bolt-action rifle, bearing serial number VS166917;

As used in this instruction, an act is done “knowingly” if the defendant realized what he was doing and did not act through ignorance, mistake, or accident. You may consider evidence of the defendant’s words, acts, or omissions, along with all the other evidence, in deciding whether the defendant acted knowingly. The government is not required to prove that the defendant knew that his acts or omissions were unlawful.

You are instructed that the government and Christian Kelly have agreed that the Weatherby, model Vanguard, .223 Remington caliber, bolt-action rifle, bearing serial number VS166917 is a firearm.

By entering into this agreement or stipulation, Christian Kelly has not admitted his guilt of the offense charged, and you may not draw an inference of guilt from the stipulation. The only effect of this stipulation is to establish the fact that the Weatherby, model

Vanguard, .223 Remington caliber, bolt-action rifle, bearing serial number VS166917 is a firearm.

The government is not required to prove who owned the firearm.

Three, that at the time Christian Kelly knowingly possessed the firearm, he knew that he had previously been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for more than one year; and

The parties have stipulated that Christian Kelly knew he had been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for more than one year on or about between June 20, 2025, and June 21, 2025.

Christian Kelly has not, by entering into this agreement or stipulation, admitted his guilt of the offense charged, and you may not draw an inference of guilt from the stipulation. The only effect of this stipulation is to establish the fact that on or about between June 20, 2025, and June 21, 2025, Christian Kelly knew he had previously been convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year.

Four, the firearm was transported across a state line at some time during or before Christian Kelly's possession of it.

The parties have stipulated that the firearm was transported across a state line at some time during or before Christian Kelly's possession of it in South Dakota, and you must consider this fourth element as proven.

By entering into this agreement or stipulation, Christian Kelly has not admitted his guilt of the offense charged, and you may not draw an inference of guilt from the stipulation. The only effect of this stipulation is to establish the fact that the firearm was transported across a state line at some time during or before Christian Kelly's possession of it.

The government is not required to prove that Christian Kelly knew the firearm crossed a state line.

For you to find Christian Kelly guilty of the offense charged in Count 1 of the Indictment, the government must prove all four of the essential elements beyond a reasonable doubt. Otherwise, you must find Christian Kelly not guilty of the offense charged in Count 1 of the Indictment.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 3 – POSSESSION OF AN UNREGISTERED FIREARM

For you to find Christian Kelly guilty of the offense of “possession of an unregistered firearm” as charged in Count 2 of the Indictment, the government must prove the following essential elements beyond a reasonable doubt:

One, on or about between June 20, 2025, and June 21, 2025, Christian Kelly knowingly possessed a firearm;

The term “knowingly” is defined for you above.

The firearm referred to here is a Weatherby, model Vanguard, .223 Remington caliber, bolt-action rifle, bearing serial number VS166917.

Two, the weapon was a rifle with a barrel of less than 16 inches in length or with an overall length of less than 26 inches;

The parties have stipulated that the weapon was a rifle with a barrel of less than 16 inches in length and with an overall length of less than 26 inches.

Three, Christian Kelly knew the firearm was a short-barreled rifle;

The parties have stipulated that the firearm was a short-barreled rifle.

By entering into this agreement or stipulation, Christian Kelly has not admitted his guilt of the offense charged, and you may not draw an inference of guilt from the stipulation. The only effect of this stipulation is to establish the fact that Christian Kelly knew the firearm was a short-barreled rifle.

Four, the firearm was capable of operating as designed or could readily be put in operating condition; and

The parties have stipulated that the firearm was capable of operating as designed or could readily be put in operating condition.

Five, the firearm was not registered to Christian Kelly in the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record.

The parties have stipulated that the firearm is not registered in the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record, and you must consider this fifth element as proven.

By entering into this agreement or stipulation, Christian Kelly has not admitted his guilt of the offense charged, and you may not draw an inference of guilt from the stipulation. The only effect of this stipulation is to establish the fact that the firearm is not registered in the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record.

For you to find Christian Kelly guilty of the offense charged in Count 2 of the Indictment, the government must prove all five of the essential elements beyond a reasonable doubt. Otherwise, you must find Christian Kelly not guilty of the offense charged in Count 2 of the Indictment.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 4 – POSSESSION

The law recognizes several kinds of possession. A person may have actual possession or constructive possession. A person may have sole or joint possession.

A person who knowingly has direct physical control over a thing, at a given time, is then in actual possession of it.

A person who, although not in actual possession, has both the power and the intention at a given time to exercise dominion or control over a thing, either directly or through another person or persons, is then in constructive possession of it. Mere physical proximity to a firearm is not enough to show constructive possession, but knowledge of a firearm's presence, combined with control is constructive possession.

If one person alone has actual or constructive possession of a thing, possession is sole. If two or more persons share actual or constructive possession of a thing, possession is joint.

Whenever the word "possession" has been used in these instructions, it includes actual as well as constructive possession and also sole as well as joint possession.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 5 – JUSTIFICATION

Christian Kelly asserts that if you find that he committed the offenses charged in the Indictment, he did so only because he was forced to commit the crimes. If you conclude that the government has proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Christian Kelly committed the crimes as charged, you must then consider whether he should nevertheless be found “not guilty” because his actions were justified.

Christian Kelly has the burden of proving it is more likely true than not true that he was justified at the time of the crimes. You decide that by considering all the evidence and deciding what evidence is more believable. This is a lower standard than proof beyond a reasonable doubt. If the evidence is equally balanced, you cannot find that issue has been proved. The government does not have the burden of proving that Christian Kelly was not justified.

To prevail on his justification defense, Christian Kelly must show that each of the following elements are more likely true than not true:

***First*, that Christian Kelly was under an unlawful and present, imminent, and impending threat of such a nature as to induce a well-grounded fear of death or serious bodily injury to himself;**

***Second*, that Christian Kelly had not recklessly or negligently placed himself in a situation where he would likely be forced to choose the criminal conduct;**

***Third*, that Christian Kelly had no reasonable legal alternative to violating the law, that is a reasonable opportunity both to refuse to do the criminal act and also to avoid the threatened harm; and**

***Four*, that a reasonable person would believe that by committing the criminal action, he would directly avoid the threatened harm.**

If Christian Kelly proves that each of these elements is more likely true than not true, then you must find him not guilty of the offenses charged.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 6 – KNOWLEDGE AND INTENT

Intent or knowledge may be proven like anything else. You may consider any statements made or acts done by the defendant and all the facts and circumstances in evidence that may aid in a determination of the defendant's knowledge or intent.

You may, but are not required to, infer that a person intends the natural and probable consequences of acts knowingly done or knowingly omitted.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 7 – IMPEACHMENT

In Preliminary Instruction No. 7, I instructed you generally on the credibility of witnesses. I now give you this further instruction on how the credibility of a witness can be “impeached” and how you may treat certain evidence.

A witness may be discredited or impeached by contradictory evidence; by a showing that the witness testified falsely concerning a material matter; or by evidence that at some other time the witness has said or done something, or has failed to say or do something, that is inconsistent with the witness’s present testimony. If earlier statements of a witness were admitted into evidence, the statements were not admitted to prove that the contents of those statements are true. Instead, you may consider those earlier statements only to determine whether you think they are consistent or inconsistent with the trial testimony of the witness and, therefore, whether they affect the credibility of that witness.

If you believe that a witness has been discredited or impeached, it is your exclusive right to give that witness’s testimony whatever weight, if any, you think it deserves.

Your decision on the facts of this case should not be determined by the number of witnesses testifying for or against a party. You should consider all the facts and circumstances in evidence to determine which of the witnesses you choose to believe or not believe. You may find that the testimony of a smaller number of witnesses on one side is more credible than the testimony of a greater number of witnesses on the other side.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 8 – IMPEACHMENT BY PRIOR CONVICTION

You have heard evidence that Christian Kelly was previously convicted of crimes. You may use that evidence only to help you decide whether to believe his testimony and how much weight to give it. The fact that he was previously convicted of a crime does not mean that he committed the crimes charged here, and you must not use that evidence as any proof of the crime charged in this case.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 9 – DEFENDANT’S PRIOR SIMILAR ACTS

You have heard testimony from Nicolis Forbes that Christian Kelly possessed a handgun on a prior occasion. You may consider this evidence only if you unanimously find it is more likely true than not true that Christian Kelly committed the act. This is a lower standard than proof beyond a reasonable doubt. You decide that by considering all of the evidence relating to the alleged act, then deciding what evidence is more believable.

If you find that this evidence has not been proved, you must disregard it. If you find this evidence has been proved, then you may consider it only for the limited purpose of deciding whether Christian Kelly had the intent and knowledge necessary to commit the crimes charged in the Indictment. You should give it the weight and value you believe it is entitled to receive.

Remember, even if you find that Christian Kelly may have committed a similar act in the past, this is not evidence that he committed such an act in this case. You may not convict a person simply because you believe he may have committed similar acts in the past. Christian Kelly is on trial only for the crimes charged, and you may consider the evidence of prior acts only on the issues stated above.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 10 – EXPERT WITNESS

You have heard testimony from a person described as an expert. Persons who, by knowledge, skill, training, education or experience, have become an expert in some field may state their opinions on matters in that field and may also state the reasons for their opinion.

Expert testimony should be considered just like any other testimony. You may accept or reject it and give it as much weight as you think it deserves, considering the witness's education and experience, the soundness of the reasons given for the opinion, the acceptability of the methods used, and all the other evidence in the case.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 11 – PRESUMPTION OF INNOCENCE AND BURDEN
OF PROOF

The presumption of innocence means that the defendant is presumed to be absolutely not guilty.

- This presumption means that you must put aside all suspicion that might arise from the defendant's arrest, the charges, or the fact that he is here in court.
- This presumption remains with the defendant throughout the trial.
- This presumption is enough, alone, for you to find the defendant not guilty, unless the government proves, beyond a reasonable doubt, all the elements of an offense charged against him.

The burden is always on the government to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

- This burden never, ever shifts to the defendant to prove his innocence.
- This burden means that the defendant does not have to call any witnesses, produce any evidence, cross-examine the government's witnesses, or testify.
- This burden means that, if the defendant does not testify, you must not consider that fact in any way, or even discuss it, in arriving at your verdict.

This burden means that you must find the defendant not guilty of an offense charged against him, unless the government proves beyond a reasonable doubt that he has committed each and every element of that offense.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 12 – REASONABLE DOUBT

A reasonable doubt is a doubt based upon reason and common sense.

- A reasonable doubt may arise from evidence produced by the government or the defendant, keeping in mind that the defendant never, ever has the burden or duty to call any witnesses or to produce any evidence.
- A reasonable doubt may arise from the government's lack of evidence.

The government must prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

- Proof beyond a reasonable doubt requires careful and impartial consideration of all the evidence in the case before making a decision.
- Proof beyond a reasonable doubt is proof so convincing that you would be willing to rely and act on it in the most important of your own affairs.

The government's burden is heavy, but it does not require proof beyond all possible doubt.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 13 – DUTY TO DELIBERATE

A verdict must represent the careful and impartial judgment of each of you. Before you make that judgment, you must consult with one another and try to reach agreement if you can do so consistent with your individual judgment.

- If you are convinced that the government has not proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty, say so.
- If you are convinced that the government has proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant is guilty, say so.
- Do not give up your honest beliefs just because others think differently or because you simply want to be finished with the case.
- On the other hand, do not hesitate to re-examine your own views and to change your opinion if you are convinced that it is wrong.
- You can only reach a unanimous verdict if you discuss your views openly and frankly, with proper regard for the opinions of others, and with a willingness to re-examine your own views.
- Remember that you are not advocates, but judges of the facts, so your sole interest is to seek the truth from the evidence.
- The question is never who wins or loses the case, because society always wins, whatever your verdict, when you return a just verdict based solely on the evidence, reason, your common sense, and these Instructions.
- You must consider all the evidence bearing on each element before you.
- Take all the time that you feel is necessary.

Remember that this case is important to the parties and to the fair administration of justice, so do not be in a hurry to reach a verdict just to be finished with the case.

FINAL INSTRUCTION NO. 14 – DUTY DURING DELIBERATIONS

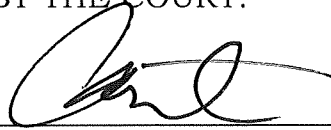
You must follow certain rules while conducting your deliberations and returning your verdict:

- Select a foreperson to preside over your discussions and to speak for you here in court.
- Do not consider punishment in any way in deciding whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty. If the defendant is guilty, I will decide what the sentence should be.
- Communicate with me by sending me a note through a Court Security Officer (CSO). The note must be signed by one or more of you. Remember that you should not tell anyone, including me, how your votes stand. I will respond as soon as possible, either in writing or orally in open court.
- Base your verdict solely on the evidence, reason, your common sense, and all Instructions, whether written or not. Again, nothing I have said or done was intended to suggest what your verdict should be—that is entirely for you to decide.
- Reach your verdict without discrimination. In reaching your verdict, you must not consider the defendant's race, color, religious beliefs, national origin, or sex. You are not to return a verdict for or against the defendant unless you would return the same verdict without regard to his race, color, religious beliefs, national origin, or sex.
- Complete the Verdict Form. The foreperson must bring the signed verdict form to the courtroom when it is time to announce your verdict.
- When you have reached a verdict, the foreperson will advise the CSO that you are ready to return to the courtroom.

Good luck with your deliberations.

Dated January 14, 2026.

BY THE COURT:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Camela', written over a horizontal line.

CAMELA C. THEELER
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF SOUTH DAKOTA
WESTERN DIVISION**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Plaintiff, vs. CHRISTIAN KELLY, Defendant.	5:25-CR-50149-CCT VERDICT FORM
--	--

We, the Jury, unanimously find the defendant, Christian Kelly, as follows:

COUNT 1: POSSESSION OF A FIREARM BY A PROHIBITED PERSON	VERDICT
On the charge of “possession of a firearm by a prohibited person” as explained in Final Instruction No. 2, please mark your verdict.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Guilty <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty

COUNT 2: POSSESSION OF AN UNREGISTERED FIREARM	VERDICT
On the charge of “possession of an unregistered firearm” as explained in Final Instruction No. 3, please mark your verdict.	<input type="checkbox"/> Not Guilty <input type="checkbox"/> Guilty

Please sign and date this Verdict Form.

Date

Foreperson