



Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOUSTON COUNTY FELON SENTENCED TO OVER 24 YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON FOR ILLEGAL GUN POSSESSION

Montgomery, Alabama - Christopher Owens, age 35, of Hope Hull, Alabama, was sentenced to 293 months in federal prison for illegal firearm possession, U.S. Attorney Leura G. Canary announced today. Owens previously pled guilty before the United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama in Montgomery on September 8, 2008, to illegally possessing a firearm while a convicted felon.

Owens was sentenced to 293 months, which is more than 24 years, in prison for possessing a 9mm pistol on March 18, 2007, after having been convicted of 10 counts of second degree Rape and 2 counts of second degree sodomy, both felony offenses under Alabama law. Because of his criminal history, the judge found Owens qualified as an Armed Career Criminal under federal law, which required the judge sentence Owens to no less than 15 years in prison. The judge also found Owens used the firearm on March 18, 2007, to break into a home in Dothan, where he held his ex-girlfriend, her three young children, her mother, and her father at gunpoint until the police arrived and disarmed him. Based on these findings, the judge increased Owens's sentence to 293 months. There is no parole from federal prison. Owens also still faces pending state charges from the incident.

In addition to the prison sentence, Owens was also sentenced to serve five years of supervised release under the supervision of a federal probation officer after his prison term

expires.

The case was investigated and prosecuted as part of the Department of Justice's Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative, which seeks to prevent violent crime through enforcement of federal firearms laws, such as the law prohibiting convicted felons from possessing firearms. The program is known as Alabama ICE in the Middle District of Alabama. According to United States Attorney Leura G. Canary, "This sentence should put convicted felons on notice that if they illegally possess firearms in the Middle District of Alabama and are caught, they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Removing criminals who possess guns from our streets remains a priority of this office."

Owens' case was investigated by officers and agents from the Dothan Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives ("ATF"), and was prosecuted with the cooperation of the Houston County District Attorney's Office.

The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Matthew Shepherd and Monica Stump.