



Department of Justice

United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton
Middle District of Florida

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CONTACT: STEVE COLE

PHONE: (813) 274-6136

FAX: (813) 274-6300

TAMPA MAN SENTENCED FOR AGGRAVATED ASSAULT ON COAST GUARD OFFICERS

Tampa – United States Attorney A. Brian Albritton announces that U.S. District Judge Virginia M. Hernandez Covington today sentenced Mark S. Koert (age 28, of Tampa) to 5 years in federal prison for use of a deadly weapon to assault United States Coast Guard (USGC) officers, criminal damage to a USCG vessel, and failure to obey an order of the USCG to stop a vessel. Koert had pleaded guilty on December 23, 2008.

According to court documents, in the early evening hours of January 26, 2008, during the Tampa Gasparilla Pirate Festival, Koert stole a 28-foot Maxum powerboat from a dock at Tampa's Harbour Island. At approximately 7:00 p.m., the crew of a USCG boat responded to a request for assistance from a Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) marine deputy, who was in pursuit of the stolen Maxum in Hillsborough Bay. The USCG spotted the Maxum, which was traveling at a high rate of speed and operating without navigational lights, and joined the chase.

With emergency lights and siren activated, the USCG intercepted the fleeing boat and used a loudspeaker to hail Koert, ordering him to stop for boarding. Koert did not comply. As the USCG boat came alongside of the Maxum, the USCG again commanded Koert to stop, both over the loudspeaker and on VHF radio. In response, Koert made a hand gesture in the shape of a gun pointed at the USCG's crew. He then turned the Maxum sharply towards the USCG vessel and attempted to ram it.

The USCG took evasive action, avoided the collision, and pursued Koert again. Koert continued to ignore commands to stop. As the chase continued, he repeatedly tried

to ram the USCG boat. A USCG officer then fired two shotgun rounds into the engine area of the Maxum but was unable to disable it. The HCSO marine deputy, still also in pursuit, also fired at the Maxum.

In response to the disabling fire, Koert drove the 28-foot Maxum directly into and over the USCG vessel, landing on top of the USCG's port bow. While on top of the USCG boat, Koert continued to try to run the Maxum completely over the USCG vessel. A USCG officer fired more shotgun rounds into the Maxum's engine area but again was unable to disable the boat.

The USCG then reversed, breaking the two boats apart, and resumed the chase. Koert continued to drive the Maxum in front of the USCG boat at a high rate of speed, sometimes circling back around or aiming directly at the USCG vessel. After more than an hour, Koert ran aground and was arrested by the USCG crew and HCSO deputies.

This case was investigated by the United States Coast Guard and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Matthew H. Perry.