



Department of Justice

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Middle District of Florida

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JURY CONVICTS NEBRASKA AVENUE ROBBER

TAMPA, FLORIDA - U.S. Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announces that a federal jury yesterday found Gregory Anthony Spain guilty of being a felon in possession of a firearm, Hobbs Act robbery, and brandishing a firearm during the robbery. Spain faces a mandatory minimum of 22 years and a maximum penalty of life in federal prison. His sentencing hearing is scheduled for July 25, 2011, at 1:30 pm.

Spain was indicted on February 16, 2011.

According to testimony and evidence presented at trial, on the night of August 25, 2010, Spain entered a Family Dollar store on Nebraska Avenue just before closing, wearing a ski mask and brandishing a revolver. He pointed the gun at a clerk, demanded money, and when she refused, pointed the gun at her and twice pulled the trigger. The firearm misfired. Spain then ripped a gold necklace off another employee and fled the store. Approximately sixteen hours later, Spain pawned the gold necklace at a pawn store, also on Nebraska Avenue, utilizing a false identity.

Seven days later, a Tampa Police Department (TPD) officer observed Spain riding a bicycle around 9:40 pm, just off Nebraska Avenue, adjacent to a closed elementary school. The officer made a lawful traffic stop and noticed that Spain matched the physical

description of the robbery suspect from the Family Dollar store. During a safety pat-down, the officer felt what appeared to be the trigger guard of a gun, in a sports-style backpack, on Spain's back and the suspect fled. Following a chase, Spain was apprehended and a ski mask, gun from the Family Dollar store robbery, a pair of heavy dark pants, and a heavy dark shirt were discovered. Further investigation by detectives and the TPD forensics unit connected Spain to the Family Dollar store robbery and the pawning of the stolen gold necklace. At the time he was apprehended, Spain was a convicted felon.

This case was investigated by the Tampa Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). It is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Thomas N. Palermo.

It is another case prosecuted as a part of the Department of Justice's "Project Safe Neighborhoods" program - a nationwide, gun-violence reduction strategy led by ATF. United States Attorney Robert E. O'Neill, along with Virginia O'Brien, Special Agent-in-Charge, ATF, is coordinating the Project Safe Neighborhoods effort here in the Middle District of Florida, in cooperation with federal, state, and local law enforcement officials.