

NEWS

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Two Delaware Valley Men Convicted of Committing String of Armed Bank Robberies

(More)

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CAMDEN – Two Delaware Valley men were convicted by a federal jury today for committing a string of nine bank robberies that were committed at gunpoint, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

After six hours of deliberations, which began Tuesday, March 18, a jury convicted Steven Gantt, 40, of Camden, and Kevin Taylor, 42, of Philadelphia, of all charges contained in a two-count Superseding Indictment. Both defendants were found guilty of one count each of conspiracy to commit robbery and carrying and brandishing a firearm during and in relation to the commission of a crime of violence.

The case was tried by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jacqueline Carle and James P. Lynch, of the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Camden. U.S. District Judge Robert B. Kugler, who presided over the 4-week trial, continued the defendants’ detention without bail pending sentencing, which is scheduled for June 25.

On August 23, 2006, Gantt and a third co-defendant, Walter Johnson, 33, of Camden, were arrested in Camden on state charges as a result of an eight-month investigation by the FBI, Camden County Prosecutor’s Office, and the police departments of Bellmawr, Camden, Cherry Hill, and Gloucester Township. Taylor was arrested on Nov. 28, in Philadelphia by Special Agents with the FBI.

During the trial, the jury heard the testimony of more than 40 government witnesses and viewed hundreds of pieces of evidence regarding the string of nine bank robberies in which the defendants were armed with and used handguns.

In convicting Gantt and Taylor, the jury found that between December 2005 and September 2006, that Gantt conspired with Taylor and Johnson to commit a series of bank robberies. According to trial testimony and evidence, the defendants attempted to conceal their identities by wearing gloves, masks, and head coverings and stole automobiles to travel to and flee from the banks. Once inside the banks, the defendants used handguns to take control over the customers and bank employees by threats and use of physical violence, including the pointing of firearms at victims.

According to evidence and testimony, including that of cooperating co-defendant Walter Johnson, the three men conspired to commit the following armed bank robberies:

- Dec. 2, 2005 Commerce Bank, Bellmawr \$12,129
- Dec. 15, 2005 Commerce Bank, Gloucester Twp. \$25,963
- Feb. 2, 2006 Commerce Bank, Bellmawr \$12,845
- March 7, 2006 Commerce Bank, Cherry Hill \$2,226
- March 25, 2006 Commerce Bank, Camden \$12,350
- April 22, 2006 PNC Bank, Cherry Hill \$20,500
- May 30, 2006 Commerce Bank, Sicklerville, \$8,900
- July 21, 2006 Commerce Bank, Mount Holly \$4,945
- Aug. 1, 2006 Commerce Bank, York, PA \$34,000

Johnson pleaded guilty on Nov. 22, 2006, to one count of conspiracy to commit robbery and one count of carrying and brandishing a firearm during and in relation to the commission of a crime of violence. Johnson is pending sentencing.

The charge of conspiracy to commit robbery carries a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 or twice the aggregate loss to the victims or gain to the defendants. The firearms convictions carry a potential life sentence.

In determining the actual sentences, Judge Kugler will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offense, the defendant's criminal history, if any, and other factors. The judge, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining a sentence. Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Christie credited Special Agents of the FBI's South Jersey Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Janice K. Fedarck in Philadelphia, the Camden County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Acting Prosecutor Joshua M. Ottenberg, the Bellmawr Police Department, under the direction of Chief William Walsh, the Camden Police Department, under the direction of Police Executive Arturo Venegas, the Cherry Hill Police Department, under the direction of Chief Charlie Jones, and the Gloucester Township Police Department, under the direction of Chief Edward S. Smith, with the investigation leading to the Indictment.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jacqueline Carle and James P. Lynch of the Criminal Division in Camden.

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Defense Attorneys:

Gantt - Frederick W. Klepp, Esq. Cherry Hill

Taylor - John Renner, Esq. Marlton