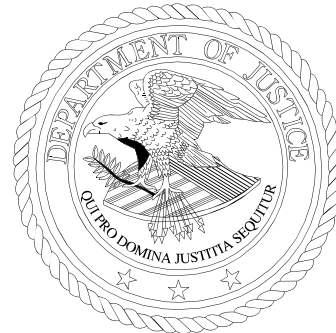


NEWS

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Four Philadelphia Men Sentenced to Federal Prison Terms for Gloucester Township Home Invasion

(More)

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CAMDEN – Four Philadelphia men were sentenced to federal prison terms, ranging from 424 months to 480 months, in connection with a December 2005 home invasion robbery in which the occupants were bound with duct tape and a safe was stolen from the home, U.S. Attorney Christopher J. Christie announced.

U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Simandle today sentenced Rasheen Mines, 27, to 480 months in federal prison. Yesterday, Judge Simandle sentenced William Hernandez, 30, to 480 months in prison; William Brown, 24, to 480 months in prison; and Lawrence Johnson, 32, to 424 months in prison.

On Nov. 20, 2006, after four hours of deliberations, a jury convicted the four defendants on one count each of conspiracy to commit robbery, robbery, interstate travel to commit a crime of violence, conspiracy to use interstate travel to commit a crime of violence, and use of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. Additionally, Mines, Brown and Johnson were convicted on one count each of possession of a firearm by a previously convicted felon.

The case was tried by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Steven D'Aguzzo and Howard Wiener.

During the trial, the jury heard the testimony of 15 government witnesses and viewed hundreds of pieces of evidence regarding a home invasion on Dec. 26, 2005, at a residence in the Erial section of Gloucester Township. According to testimony, upon entering the residence the intruders, at least two of whom were armed with handguns, forced the residents into a second-floor bedroom where the defendants physically restrained them by binding their hands and feet with duct tape. The victims were held hostage for approximately one hour.

In convicting the defendants, the jury found that the four defendants, after restraining the residents, stole jewelry, cellular telephones and other items from the home. After locating a large safe in the house, the defendants demanded the safe's combination from the residents, who were unable to provide the combination. The suspects then removed the safe from the residence and fled in a sport utility vehicle.

One of the residents was able to remove the duct tape and fled to a neighbor's house to notify police. The victim provided a description of the SUV, which was then broadcasted to other law enforcement agencies.

The vehicle crossed the Delaware River into Philadelphia where the SUV crashed into a parked car and the four defendants fled on foot. Three of the suspects, Mines, Brown and Johnson, were apprehended following a foot pursuit. The safe was recovered, as well as other items belonging to the victims, along with two handguns, masks and gloves from the sport utility vehicle.

After further investigation, Hernandez was arrested on Feb. 22, 2006, subsequent to his return from Mexico where he had fled to immediately after the crash.

In determining the actual sentences, Judge Simandle consulted 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 Police Officers with the Gloucester City Police Department, under the direction of Chief William Crothers; the Gloucester Township Police Department, under the direction of Chief Edward Smith; the Brooklawn Police Department, under the direction of Chief Francis McKinney; the Philadelphia Police Department, under the direction of Police Commissioner Sylvester Johnson; Special Agents of the FBI's Cherry Hill Resident Agency and the Philadelphia Division, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge J.P. Weis in Philadelphia; and the Camden County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Acting Prosecutor Joshua M. Ottenberg, with the investigation leading to the Indictment.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Steven D'Aguzzo and Howard Wiener of the Criminal Division in Camden.

– end –

Defense Attorneys:

Brown – Lisa Evans-Lewis Asst. Federal Public Defender

Hernandez – Fortunato Perry, Jr. Philadelphia

Johnson – Edward Borden, Jr., Esq. Haddon Township

Mines – James Lyons, Esq. Philadelphia