



PRESS RELEASE

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ARMED CAREER CRIMINAL FROM ROSWELL SENTENCED TO ALMOST 25 YEARS IN PRISON

ALBUQUERQUE – Yesterday afternoon, a federal judge in Las Cruces sentenced Arthur Harris, 47, of Roswell, N.M., to 298 months in prison for his firearms conviction, announced U.S. Attorney Kenneth J. Gonzales. Harris will be on supervised release for three years after he completes his prison sentence.

Harris, who has been in federal custody since his arrest on Aug. 13, 2010, was convicted of being a felon in possession of a firearm on May 20, 2011, after a three-day jury trial. The evidence at trial established that, at approximately 3:30 a.m. on June 25, 2010, officers of the Roswell Police Department responded to a report that a man was assaulting a woman with a firearm at a residence on South Ash Street in Roswell. When the officers arrived, Harris was outside the residence. After securing Harris, the officers spoke to a female at the scene, who said Harris hit her, pointed a gun at her, and threatened to kill her. The officers searched the area and found a loaded Beretta .25 caliber pistol, with a cartridge in the chamber, approximately three to five feet from where the officers apprehended Harris.

Yesterday, the judge determined that Harris was an armed career criminal and thus subject to an enhanced sentence under the Armed Career Criminal Act. According to court filings, Harris had at least four prior convictions for violent felonies before he was arrested in this case. His lengthy criminal history, which began in 1981, includes felony convictions for residential and commercial burglaries, aggravated assault with a deadly weapon, accessory to attempted criminal penetration, in the Fifth Judicial District Court for the State of New Mexico (Chaves County). Harris also has a prior federal conviction for being a felon in possession of a firearm for which he served a ten year prison sentence.

Harris initially was charged in state court by the District Attorney's Office for the Fifth Judicial District of the State of New Mexico. The state case was dismissed after the U.S. Attorney's Office accepted the case for federal prosecution under a federal anti-violence initiative that targets "the worst of the worst" offenders for federal prosecution. Under this initiative, a state-wide, multi-agency effort denominated as the New Mexico Federal Gang Task Force, the U.S. Attorney's Office and federal law enforcement agencies work with New Mexico's District Attorneys and state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies to target violent

or repeat offenders for federal prosecution with the goal of removing the offenders from our communities for as long as possible.

After the sentencing hearing, U.S. Attorney Gonzales said, “Arthur Harris earned the lengthy sentence imposed on him today. Harris has been a menace to the people of Chaves County and a major headache for the law enforcement community for more than 30 years. Because of the cooperative efforts of ATF, the Roswell Police Department and the District Attorney’s Office, Chaves County is safer now that Harris has been removed from the community for almost 25 years.”

Janetta Hicks, District Attorney for the Fifth Judicial District, added “The cooperation between federal and state law enforcement results in safer communities. Our partnership with the United States Attorney has been beneficial for both of our agencies and, more importantly the citizens of our community.”

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives and the Roswell Police Department, and was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Aaron O. Jordan and W. Ronald Jennings (ret.).

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