



U.S. Department of Justice

United States Attorney Eastern District of Arkansas

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PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE: **ARMED ROBBER PLEADS GUILTY**

Little Rock - Bud Cummins, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, announced today that Dewayne Laverdo Hamilton, age 27, of Forrest City, Arkansas entered a plea of guilty for his role in a conspiracy to commit the armed robbery of the East Central Arkansas Insurance, Incorporated, an independent insurance agency located in Forrest City, Arkansas on April 26, 2005. Hamilton also pled guilty to Conspiracy to Brandish Firearms during a Crime of Violence, and to being a Felon in Possession of Firearms before United States District Judge James M. Moody, Jr. today.

According to the Indictment and proceedings in this case, on April 26, 2005, Hamilton and a co-defendant robbed the employees of East Central Arkansas Insurance, Inc. by threat of force and violence while armed with firearms. The firearms utilized in this robbery were a 9 millimeter pistol and a .25 caliber pistol. Hamilton and his co-defendant were located by Forrest City Police Department Officers hiding in a nearby residence shortly after the robbery. Currency and property belonging to the Insurance Agency, as well as personal belongings of the victims were recovered from the residence.

"Gun crime is outrageous. This conduct simply cannot be tolerated anywhere--in small towns or big cities. Through our partnership with local law enforcement authorities under Project Safe Neighborhoods, we are able to hold these defendants accountable and expose them to harsh federal sentences with no parole," stated Cummins. "These crimes should not happen, but as long as they do, the perpetrators face tough penalties."

The statutory penalty for Conspiracy and Attempted Interference with Commerce by Threats or Violence is not more than 20 years imprisonment and/or a fine of not more than \$250,000; Conspiracy to Brandish Firearms during Crimes of Violence carries a mandatory

seven year term of imprisonment consecutive to any other term of imprisonment imposed; Felon in Possession of Firearms is not more than 10 years imprisonment and/or a fine of up to \$ 250,000. Hamilton will be sentenced by District Judge Moody at a later date.

Hamilton, a two-time convicted felon, has previously been convicted of Murder and Possession of Firearm by a Convicted Felon in Arkansas state court proceedings.

Cecil Ray Aldridge, the co-defendant, is scheduled for trial February 27, 2006 on similar charges.

This matter is designated as a Project Safe Neighborhoods case. Project Safe Neighborhoods is a federal initiative aimed at reducing gun crime by networking local prosecutors and law enforcement with federal counterparts. Those prosecuted under federal statutes serve longer sentences partly due to the fact that there is no parole in the federal system.

The indictment is the result of an investigation conducted jointly by the Forrest City Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in Little Rock, Arkansas.

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