



Department of Justice

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Western District of Michigan

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LANSING MAN SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS FOR POSSESSION OF FIREARMS

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN — Christopher Joseph Atkins, 28, of Lansing, Michigan, was sentenced to 20 years in federal prison for his possession of firearms and body armor. A jury convicted Mr. Atkins of these offenses in July, 2011. U.S. District Judge Robert J. Jonker imposed the sentence.

Atkins was previously convicted of manslaughter in 2002 when he shot another individual multiple times. Because of this conviction and others, he was prohibited from lawfully possessing firearms or body armor. In August, 2010, Lansing Police arrested Atkins after he became involved in an altercation outside of a local club, pointed a handgun at the bar manager and others, and attempted to fire the weapon. After his arrest, Atkins escaped from custody while obtaining medical treatment for his injuries and remained a fugitive for nearly five months. In January, 2011, Lansing Police found Atkins at an address on Rayborn Avenue in Lansing. A police helicopter spotted Atkins attempting to hide a firearm in the backyard. After hearing the helicopter, Atkins took the firearm back into the residence. Police surrounded the home for several hours and observed Atkins jumping a fence between the residence and the neighboring property with a bag in his hand. Atkins then returned to the Rayborn residence. Atkins refused to surrender after receiving a phone call from a crisis negotiator and was arrested when he attempted to flee the residence shortly thereafter. Police recovered three firearms and a body armor vest from the duffle-bag that Atkins attempted to hide near a deck in the neighbor's backyard.

“The U.S. Attorney’s Office remains committed to the vigorous prosecution of felons who unlawfully possess firearms,” said U.S. Attorney Donald A. Davis. “This case is an especially good example of why dangerous weapons do not belong in the hands of felons. The sentencing judge recognized and appreciated the threat that Atkins presented to those involved and the public at large when he imposed a sentence that exceeded the amount of time called for under the sentencing guidelines.”

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, and the Lansing Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Ronald M. Stella and Phillip J. Green.

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