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## **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Thursday, February 10, 2011  
[WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN](http://WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN)

### **Federal jury convicts felon in Project Exile Minneapolis firearms case**

Earlier today in federal court in Minneapolis, a federal jury found a career criminal guilty of possessing a .357 caliber revolver in December of 2009. Mandel McDonald Benson, age 37, of Minneapolis, was convicted on one count of being a career criminal in possession of a firearm. Benson was indicted on October 5, 2010.

Trial evidence proved that on December 15, 2009, Bloomington police found Benson in possession of the revolver. He was apprehended following a brief chase that was preceded by a shoplifting incident at a local Wal-Mart. Police recovered the handgun from inside a black bag Benson was carrying at the time of his arrest. The revolver had three live rounds of ammunition in the cylinder.

Because Benson is a convicted felon, he is prohibited from possessing firearms or ammunition at any time. His past felony convictions include third-degree aggravated robbery in 1992, simple robbery in 1997, and attempted first-degree aggravated robbery in 2000, all in Hennepin County.

Since Benson's three prior felony convictions are for crimes of violence, he was prosecuted as a federal armed career criminal. As a result, he will now face a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in federal prison. United States District Court Judge David S. Doty will determine his actual sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Bloomington Police Department, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the Hennepin County Sheriff's Office-Crime Lab, and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives-Violent Crime Impact Team. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Jeffrey M. Bryan and Laura M. Provinzino.

The case was charged federally through Project Exile Minneapolis. That law enforcement initiative was launched on July 22, 2010, as part of a City-wide effort to reduce gun violence. Through Project Exile, the Minneapolis Police Department and the ATF work together to apprehend serial criminals for violations of gun laws. Then, the Hennepin County Attorney's Office teams up with the U.S. Attorney's Office to determine where those offenders will most effectively be prosecuted – state or federal court. Those determinations are based on the offenders' criminal histories and current charges, among other factors. To date, the U.S. Attorney's Office has brought charges against more than a dozen serious habitual criminals through Project Exile Minneapolis.

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