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News Release

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Another armed career criminal indicted as part of Project Exile Minneapolis

A 46-year-old Minneapolis felon has been indicted today in federal court in Minneapolis for allegedly possessing a .44 magnum revolver. The indictment charges Michael Edward Willis with one count of being an armed career criminal in possession of a firearm.

The indictment alleges that Willis possessed the revolver on October 19, 2010. Because he is a felon, Willis cannot possess firearms or ammunition at any time. His prior convictions include robbery in Michigan in 1985, first-degree burglary in Wright County, Minnesota, in 2006, and robbery in Dakota County, Minnesota, in 2008. Since at least three of those offenses were crimes of violence or serious drug crimes, Willis is now subject to the federal armed career criminal statute, which mandates a 15-year minimum prison sentence if he is convicted of the charge presently levied against him. He faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison. All sentences, of course, will be determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Minneapolis Police Department and the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives-Violent Crime Impact Team. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kimberly M. Hare.

Willis is the latest defendant 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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An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by a defendant. A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.