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# **News Release**

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## **Career Criminal from St. Paul sentenced for being a felon in possession of a firearm**

MINNEAPOLIS – Earlier today in federal court, a 42-year-old St. Paul career criminal was sentenced for possessing a firearm. United States District Court Judge Joan N. Ericksen sentenced Theodore Stevie Varner to 235 months in prison on one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm. He was indicted on November 1, 2010, and was convicted by a jury on March 3, 2011.

Because Varner previously was convicted of at least one felony, he is prohibited under federal law from possessing firearms at any time. Moreover, since at least three of his prior felony convictions were for violent felonies or serious drug offenses, he was subject to the penalties contained in 18 U.S.C. § 924(e), the federal armed career criminal statute. That statute mandates a minimum 15-year prison sentence.

Varner's previous felony convictions, all in Ramsey County, included aggravated robbery in 1989, third-degree sale of cocaine in 1994, and third degree sale of a controlled substance in 1999.

The evidence presented at Varner's federal-court trial proved that he possessed a French-made, 22-caliber pistol on September 22, 2010. On that date, a man, later identified as Varner, was seen at a St. Paul apartment complex with a weapon. When police arrived, they spotted Varner, who was a passenger in a Ford Explorer. They approached the vehicle, but the vehicle drove off, prompting a police chase. About a block away, Varner exited the vehicle and ran down an alley, between houses and through yards. Along the way, Varner tripped and fell, all while in sight of the police. The authorities ultimately apprehended Varner and, retracing his steps, found the gun on the ground where he had fallen.

This case was the result of an investigation by the St. Paul Police Department and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Deidre Y. Aanstad and Karen B. Schommer.

Note, this case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, an initiative launched by the U.S. Justice Department in 2001 to promote a multi-jurisdictional, comprehensive approach to reducing gun crime in America. PSN provides resources to strengthen law enforcement and crime prevention partnerships that are working to make our streets and communities safer.

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