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News Release

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Felon pleads guilty to possessing a .40-caliber pistol

ST. PAUL – Yesterday in federal court, John Lee Bartel, a 33-year-old felon with no known address, pleaded guilty to possessing a .40-caliber, semi-automatic pistol from March 30, 2011 until April 20, 2011. Bartel, who was charged on May 17, 2011, entered his plea before United States District Court Judge Donovan W. Frank.

In his plea agreement, Bartel admitted possessing the firearm. Because Bartel is a felon, he is prohibited under federal law from possessing a firearm at any time. Bartel's prior Ramsey County convictions include third-degree burglary (2003), theft of a motor vehicle (2003 and 2005), and fleeing police in a motor vehicle (2007, 2008 and 2009). Bartel has additional convictions in Freeborn, Hennepin, Washington and Wright counties in Minnesota and in Wisconsin's St. Croix County.

According to a law enforcement affidavit filed in the case, Bartel led police on a high-speed chase through a St. Paul east side neighborhood after failing to stop, pursuant to a police request, following a traffic violation. During the pursuit, Bartel drove his Yukon truck off the road, crashing it into a ravine. Officers then observed Bartel exit the truck. He was holding something in his right hand. The police ordered him to stop. Bartel, however, dropped the object, which was later discovered to be a pistol, and fled on foot. He was ultimately apprehended. The recovered pistol had been reported as stolen from a Hastings residence.

For his crime, Bartel faces a potential maximum penalty of ten years in prison. Judge Frank will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled. This case is the result of an investigation by the St. Paul Police Department and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, with assistance from the Hastings Police Department. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Lola Velazquez-Aguilu and LeeAnn K. Bell.

Note, this case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods ("PSN"), 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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