



**United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
District of Minnesota**

**B. Todd Jones,
United States Attorney**

**Jeanne F. Cooney
Director of Community Relations
(612) 664-5611
email: jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov**

News Release

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Felon pleads guilty to possessing a .22-caliber revolver

MINNEAPOLIS – Earlier today in federal court in St. Paul, a 42-year-old felon pleaded guilty to possessing a .22-caliber revolver. Robert Ellis Hastings, of Cascade Township in Olmsted County, pleaded guilty to one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm. Hastings, who was indicted on January 19, 2011, entered his plea before United States District Court Judge Richard H. Kyle.

In his plea agreement, Hastings admitted he possessed the gun on September 13, 2010. On that day, police conducted a traffic stop involving a car driven by Hastings. One of the two passengers in that car immediately exited the vehicle and fled on foot, prompting a chase. Law enforcement then obtained and executed a search warrant on the vehicle, where they found a loaded .22-caliber revolver in the trunk.

Because he is a felon, Hastings cannot legally possess firearms or ammunition at any time. His prior convictions include two in North Carolina for robbery (1993 and 2000) and two from Wisconsin, one of them for bail jumping in 2005 and the other for aggravated battery with intent to cause great harm in that same year. Since at least three of those offenses were crimes of violence, Hastings 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. For his crime, he faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison. Judge Kyle will determine his sentence at a future hearing, yet to be scheduled.

This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Southeast Minnesota Narcotics and Gang Task Force, the Olmsted County Sheriff's Office, and the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael A. Dees.

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 work to make our streets and communities safer.

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