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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Thursday, March 24, 2011
WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN

Savage man pleads guilty to possessing firearms and explosives

Earlier today in federal court in St. Paul, a 50-year-old Savage man pleaded guilty to possessing a machine gun and distributing explosives. Wesley Noah Banks pleaded guilty to one count of illegal possession of a machine gun and one count of illegal distribution of explosive materials. Banks, who was charged on February 14, 2011, entered his plea before United States District Court Judge Paul A. Magnuson.

In his plea agreement, Banks admitted that on January 29, 2010, he received a model AR-15 machine gun. He also admitted that on June 7, 2010, he distributed two destructive devices to Bruce Wayne Leathart, who was sentenced on November 24, 2010, to 27 months in federal prison on one count of illegal possession of a machine gun. Moreover, Banks admitted that on April 23, 2010, he sold Leathart four explosive devices, commonly known as M-80s.

On June 8, 2010, a federal search warrant was executed at Banks' residence. There, authorities seized additional bombs; chemicals used to manufacture explosives; 29 firearms, including seven suspected machine guns; components to manufacture more machine guns; and an indoor grow operation containing nearly 100 marijuana plants.

For his crimes, Banks faces a potential maximum penalty of ten years in federal prison on each charge. Judge Magnuson 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, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Steven L. Schleicher.

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