



**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](mailto:jeanne.cooney@usdoj.gov)**

## **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Monday, May 16, 2011  
[WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN](http://WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN)

### **Fridley felon federally indicted for armed robbery of Columbia Heights convenience store**

MINNEAPOLIS – A 34-year-old felon from Fridley was recently indicted in connection with the March 11, 2011, armed robbery of the Totem Superette in Columbia Heights. On May 11, 2011, Jimmy Earl Matthews was charged with one count of possession of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, which, in this case, carries a potential maximum sentence of life in prison. Matthews also was charged with one count of interference with commerce by robbery, pursuant to the Hobbs Act, as well as one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm. On May 13, 2011, Matthews had his initial appearance in federal court.

The indictment in this case alleges that on March 11, 2011, Matthews entered the store, demanded cash, and threatened an employee by brandishing a firearm. According to an Anoka County criminal complaint, the store was robbed at approximately 9:38 p.m. Allegedly, a Columbia Heights police officer responding to the call observed Matthews exit the alley next to the store and momentarily hide behind a parked vehicle. He also allegedly saw Matthews grab something inside his sweatshirt. After that, Matthews purportedly ran, and the officer gave chase. During the pursuit, Matthews reportedly fell into a snow bank, where the officer witnessed him hide something. According to the officer, Matthews then got up and ran into a nearby building, where he was met by other police officers, prompting him to turn and run some more. At that point, the officer who had been pursuing him reportedly observed him throw a pair of blue gloves and a bandana into the snow, those items matching what the robber had been wearing. Shortly thereafter, Matthews was apprehended. Behind the parked vehicle, police found a .38-caliber pistol with a fully loaded magazine and a bullet in the chamber. In the snow bank, police recovered \$146 in cash.

Because he is a felon, Matthews is prohibited under federal law from possessing firearms or ammunition at any time. Matthews's prior felony convictions include aggravated robbery (1997) and second-degree murder (1999), both in Hennepin County.

The Hobbs Act, passed by Congress in 1946, allows federal prosecutors to prosecute individuals who commit armed robbery in places of business involved in interstate commerce. Federal prosecution of these cases is sometimes beneficial since the penalties are often tougher than under state law. Furthermore, because the federal system has no parole, those who receive federal sentences serve virtually the entire time imposed.

If convicted in the federal case now filed against him, Matthews faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison for possession of a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence; up to 20 years for interference with commerce by robbery, pursuant to the Hobbs Act; and a potential maximum of ten years for being a felon in possession of a firearm. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the Columbia Heights Police Department, the Fridley Police Department, the Anoka County Sheriff's Office, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, with assistance from the Anoka County Crime Lab. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael A. Dees and Carol M. Kayser.

###

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.