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News Release

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Felon charged for possessing a .40-caliber pistol

MINNEAPOLIS – Earlier today in federal court, John Lee Bartel, a 33-year-old felon with no known address, was charged with one count of possessing a firearm. According to the Information filed in the case, Bartel possessed a 40-caliber, semi-automatic pistol on March 20, 2011.

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 earlier in the day from a Hastings' residence.

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).

If convicted, Bartel faces a potential maximum penalty of ten years in prison. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge. This case is the result of an investigation by the St. Paul Police Department and the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, with assistance from the Hastings Police Department. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Lola Velazquez-Aguilu.

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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A defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until he or she pleads guilty or is proven guilty at trial.