



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

## **News Release**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Monday, September 12, 2011  
[WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN](http://WWW.JUSTICE.GOV/USAO/MN)

### **Rochester man charged for robbing three McDonald's**

MINNEAPOLIS—Recently in federal court in St. Paul, a 24-year-old Rochester man was charged in connection with the armed robbery of McDonald's restaurants in Byron, Rochester and Winona that occurred in September of 2010 and June of 2011. On September 8, 2011, Christian Aaron Alexander was charged via an Information with three counts of interference with commerce by robbery, in violation of the Hobbs Act, and one count of brandishing a firearm in relation to a crime of violence.

Allegedly, Alexander took money from each restaurant and threatened employees with a firearm. On September 19, 2010, Alexander took approximately \$1,882 from the Winona McDonald's; on June 15, 2011, he took approximately \$1,851 from the Byron McDonald's; and on June 26, 2011, he took approximately \$2,740 from the Rochester McDonald's. According to a law enforcement affidavit filed in the case, on September 19, employees reported that they were approached by two masked men, one of which was armed with a pistol, as they entered the restaurant shortly after 4 a.m. They opened the safe after getting the combination from an employee, took the employees' wallets and cell phones and ordered the employees into a walk-in cooler. When the employees exited the cooler approximately 20 minutes later, the robbers were gone.

On September 20, 2010, during an investigation of a stolen vehicle, police found receipts for masks similar to those used during the robbery. Store surveillance videos show a man, later identified as Alexander, purchasing the masks.

On June 15, the Byron McDonald's was robbed in a similar fashion and at about the same time. However, the suspects were a man and a woman. During the robbery, a shot was fired but no one was injured. Soon, the restaurant manager arrived and was forced by gunpoint to open the safe. At 5 a.m. on June 26, an employee was in the restaurant's parking when he was approached by a man, later identified as Alexander. Alexander pointed a Colt .45 pistol and forced him and other employees inside the McDonald's. Alexander allegedly then demanded their cash and cell phones, and then ordered them to open the safe.

Because Alexander was a suspect in the two prior robberies, police went to his residence and found him inside his vehicle. Officers found cash lying on the back seat floor of the vehicle, and seized the gun, a plastic bag containing numerous rounds of ammunition, a couple of McDonald's bags and clothing that matched those worn by the robber. Alexander was then arrested.

The Hobbs Act, passed by Congress in 1946, allows federal prosecutors to prosecute violent, habitual criminals 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, Alexander faces a potential maximum penalty of life in prison on the brandishing a firearm count; and 20 years on each interference with commerce by robbery count. All sentences will be determined by a federal district court judge.

This case is the result of an investigation by the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Rochester and Winona police departments and the Olmsted County Sheriff's Office. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Thomas M. Hollenhorst.

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

