



Department of Justice

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Western District of Texas

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MIDLAND MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL CARJACKING CHARGES

United States Attorney Robert Pitman announced that in Midland today, 24-year-old Justin Lane Watson of San Angelo, Texas, pleaded guilty to his role in two carjacking incidents last year.

Appearing before United States Magistrate Judge David Counts this morning, Watson pleaded guilty to two counts of carjacking. According to court documents, on the evening of December 16, 2011, Watson stole a 1994 Grand Prix from the parking lot of a convenience store in Midland. Approximately 45 minutes later, Watson abandoned the Grand Prix at another local convenience store because it had a blown tire. While at the convenience store, Watson admittedly jumped into the vacant driver's seat of a 2004 GMC Envoy. A passenger in the Envoy managed to get out before Watson drove off. A few moments later, the Envoy, now being driven by Watson, blew a tire while traveling down Highway 158 in Midland County. An approaching motorist, seeing the Envoy in the middle of the road, stopped to provide assistance. When the driver stopped, Watson approached and forcibly removed the driver from his Ford F350. Watson then successfully wrestled control of the truck away from a passenger. A second passenger managed to escape from the truck before Watson fled the scene. Believing that his passengers were still inside truck, the driver jumped onto a flat-bed trailer being pulled by the truck. While heading southbound on Highway 158, a high speed chase ensued at speeds ranging from 70 to 100 miles per hour over the course of approximately 70 miles. Law enforcement authorities near Sterling City, Texas, managed to stop the truck by deploying tire spikes. The driver of the truck remained on the trailer throughout the entire vehicle chase. The passenger who wrestled with Watson for control of the truck suffered cuts and bruises as a result and required medical treatment.

Watson, who has remained in custody since the carjacking incidents, faces up to 15 years in federal prison and a maximum \$250,000 fine per count. No sentencing date has been scheduled.

This case was investigated by the Midland Police Department with assistance from the Texas Department of Public Safety and the Sterling County Sheriff's Office. Assistant United States Attorney John Klassen is prosecuting this case on behalf of the Government.

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