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Office of the United States Attorney
Western District of Wisconsin

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MADISON MAN SENTENCED TO 21 MONTHS FOR DRUG AND FIREARM CRIMES

Madison, Wis. - Stephen P. Sinnott, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Vernon Thornton, 47, Madison, Wis., was sentenced yesterday by U.S. District Judge Barbara B. Crabb to 21 months in prison, without the possibility of parole, for unlawfully possessing ammunition as a convicted felon, for attempting to possess marijuana with intent to distribute it, and for possessing marijuana with intent to distribute it. In addition, Thornton's 2005 pickup truck used in committing the crimes was forfeited. Thornton was found guilty of these charges on February 24, 2010, after a two-day jury trial.

At trial, the government presented evidence that on February 26, 2009, officers with the Dane County Narcotics and Gang Task Force intercepted a package that contained over four kilograms of marijuana. Subsequent investigation revealed that Thornton was supposed to take possession of several pounds of the marijuana, which had been shipped from Texas. When Thornton arrived to meet his source, who was working with the police, he was arrested.

In Thornton's truck, officers recovered documents showing he had been wiring money to Texas and that he had received a similar package containing marijuana in the past. A warrant was subsequently executed at Thornton's home and officers recovered an additional eleven ounces of marijuana, as well as numerous rounds of various calibers of ammunition. As a two-time convicted felon, Thornton was prohibited by federal law from possessing ammunition.

The charges against Thornton were the result of an investigation conducted by the Dane County Narcotics and Gang Task Force. The prosecution of the case has been handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Rita M. Rumbelow.

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