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News Release

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Mahnomen man sentenced to 380 months in prison in connection with robbery, shooting of gun store owners

A 58-year-old Mahnomen man was sentenced today to 380 months in federal prison by United States District Court Judge Richard Kyle for his role in the Oct. 5, 2005, robbery and shooting of the owners of a gun store in Shelvin, Minnesota.

In issuing the sentence at the federal courthouse in Duluth, Judge Kyle said that John Thomas Turpin was a dangerous person, and that the sentence reflects both Turpin's acts and his criminal history. Kyle added that Turpin should not be allowed back into society.

Turpin was convicted by a jury on June 20, 2007, of multiple counts in connection with the Oct. 5, 2005, robbery. They were: robbery affecting interstate commerce, aiding and abetting the discharge of a firearm during a crime of violence, one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm and one count of being a felon in possession of ammunition.

According to trial testimony and court documents, Turpin entered the A&E Produce Gun Shop in Shelvin at about 2 p.m., proceeded to load one of the store's shotguns with ammunition he had in his pocket and pointed the weapon at a woman in the store. One of the store owners heard the gun close and rushed toward Turpin, who then shot the woman in the leg with the shotgun.

The store owner attempted to recover the gun from Turpin, but was shot by Turpin in the shoulder. Turpin then fled. Turpin reloaded the shotgun and, according to his statement to officers, was going to shoot the owner if he was pursued. Turpin ultimately hid in the woods located behind the store for two hours before law enforcement found and arrested him.

According to an affidavit filed by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), in an interview with law enforcement, Turpin stated he was taking his brother back to Minneapolis and planned to rob the store on the way. Turpin also stated that he had previously cased the store, and brought a .12-gauge shotgun, ammunition, rope, zip ties, rubber gloves and a police scanner to help facilitate the crime. All of the items were found in Turpin's vehicle.

Both victims required hospitalization and surgery to address their injuries.

Turpin has a lengthy criminal history dating back to 1967 when he was convicted and served time for aggravated assault for shooting a victim with a .25-caliber pistol. He was convicted for numerous aggravated robberies in 1980, 1989 and 1990. Turpin was on federal supervised release when he committed the crimes in Shelvin.

This case was the result of an investigation by the ATF, the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, the Bagley Police Department, the sheriff's offices of Clearwater and Polk counties and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Christian S. Wilton.