



Department of Justice

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TWO SENTENCED TO MORE THAN 99 YEARS EACH FOR ARMED ROBBERIES

CHARLOTTE, NC - On Monday, October 6, 2008, Andre L. Corbett, 28, and Niles M. Belk, 34, both of Charlotte, North Carolina, were sentenced to 141 years and 99.5 years in federal prison, respectively, for committing several armed robberies throughout the local area in 2004 and 2005.

After a trial in December 2007, a federal jury convicted Corbett and Belk of conspiring to rob and robbing three Food Lion supermarkets and two Dollar General stores together. Additionally, the jury convicted Corbett for robbing a First Citizen's Bank branch and a Sam's Mart convenience store, for obstructing justice, threatening a federal law enforcement official, and sending a threatening letter through the U.S. mail.

According to information produced at trial, during the robberies Corbett and Belk covered themselves head-to-toe, preventing their victims from identifying them. Trial evidence showed that Salisbury Police Department Detectives Brian Cooper and Thomas Wilsey caught the armed defendants as they were trying to escape, with guns drawn, from the final robbery. Then according to testimony and evidence introduced at trial, U.S. Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives Special Agent Darren Solomon and other investigators connected the defendants to the earlier robberies. Trial evidence showed, for example, that law enforcement recovered from Corbett's cell phone photographs of the money from two robberies that he took within minutes after the crimes. Also, evidence revealed that Corbett wore the same shirt in the bank robbery that he had worn for his driver's license photo one week earlier, and that Belk wore the same distinctive gloves in some of the robberies.

In announcing the sentences, Gretchen C.F. Shappert, the United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, stated, "The defendants terrorized numerous victims during their armed crime spree. We thank the law enforcement officers who had the investigative skills to connect the crimes, and the victims who had the personal strength to come forward and do their civic duty by testifying. In the end, the defendants' stiff penalties show that armed violent criminals will reap what they sow."

The following agencies participated in the investigation of this case: the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives, City of Salisbury Police Department, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, City of Stallings Police Department, North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, and Union County Sheriff's Office. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Steven R. Kaufman and Kimlani M. Ford.

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