



U.S. Department of Justice
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NEWS RELEASE

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103-YEAR SENTENCE FOR GUN-WIELDING ROBBER ONE OF THE LONGEST EVER FOR PROJECT SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS

WICHITA, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced today that **Maurice Franklin, Jr.**, 30, Neodesha, Kan., has been sentenced to 103.5 years in federal prison.

Franklin was sentenced Jan. 18, 2005 by U.S. District Court Judge Wesley E. Brown in Wichita. It was one of the longest sentences ever awarded in a case handled under Project Safe Neighborhoods, a national initiative to reduce gun violence.

“Felons who wield firearms while committing crimes face stiff, mandatory sentences and zealous prosecution under the Project Safe Neighborhoods program,” Melgren said. “Let the sentencing of Maurice Franklin be a warning to others. The trail of terror that Maurice Franklin left in the communities of Topeka, Coffeyville and Independence ends in prison.”

Franklin was convicted on Sept. 8, 2004, in U.S. District Court in Wichita, Kan., following a six-day jury trial. He was convicted of:

- Three counts of robbery
- Three counts of using a firearm during a robbery;
- Two counts of illegally possessing a firearm after a felony conviction.
- One count of car jacking.
- One count of using a firearm during a car jacking.

The jury was unable to reach a verdict on three counts charging that Franklin robbed a Carlos O’Kelly Mexican Restaurant robbery in Topeka, Kan. and shot one of the managers.

Evidence presented at trial established that on March 11, 2002, at approximately 7:45 p.m., Franklin knocked on the door of a residence in Independence, Kan., that was the home of a man, woman and two small children. Franklin, wearing a mask and carrying a handgun, forced his way into the home and took the man at gunpoint from his home. Franklin had the

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man drive his van to Independence High School where Franklin threatened to kill the man. The man jumped from his moving van and ran into the high school where Franklin shot the man in the leg. Franklin was also convicted of robbing the Taco Inn, Independence, Kansas, on March 9, 2002, the Braum's, Independence, Kansas, on April 30, 2003, and the Kentucky Fried Chicken, Coffeyville, Kansas, on May 8, 2003.

Project Safe Neighborhoods is a top priority of the Department of Justice and the United States Attorney's office in Kansas, second only to the fight against terrorism, Melgren said. The program was instituted in 2001 in response to the fact that nearly half a million people are victims of non-fatal firearm crimes each year and about two-thirds of the nation's homicides are committed with guns.

Melgren commended the excellent work of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Kansas Bureau of Investigation, the Chanute Police Department, the Topeka Police Department, the Parsons Police Department, the Independence Police Department, and the Coffeyville Police Department in this investigation and Assistant U.S. Attorneys Matt Treaster and Alan Metzger in this prosecution.

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