



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DEFENDANT SENTENCED TO 29 YEARS FOR FIREARMS VIOLATIONS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a defendant was sentenced in federal court today after being convicted at trial of violating federal firearms laws.

Robert Joseph Harper, Jr., 28, address unknown, was sentenced by U.S. Chief District Judge Dean Whipple this morning to 29 years and two months in federal prison without parole.

On June 28, 2005, **Harper** was convicted by a trial jury of being a felon in possession of a firearm and of possessing stolen firearms.

Harper was arrested on April 16, 2004, when a law enforcement officer saw him in a 2003 Chevy Trailblazer that had been reported stolen out of Lebanon, Mo. **Harper** sped away and attempted to elude the officer until **Harper** crashed the Trailblazer. In a search of the vehicle, officers found a Bryco Arms 9 mm handgun in the driver's seat, fully loaded with a round in the chamber, as well as six rifles and a shotgun, all of which had been reported stolen.

Under the federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for anyone who has been convicted of a felony to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. It is also illegal for anyone to be in possession of stolen firearms. **Harper** has seven prior felony convictions, including at least three violent felony convictions. Federal statutes mandate a minimum 15-year sentence for any convicted defendant with at least three violent felony convictions.

The federal jury also found that **Harper** possessed the firearms in connection with the felony offenses of burglary, tampering, stealing, and resisting arrest by flight in a vehicle.

This case was prosecuted by special Assistant U.S. Attorney Michael O. Hendrickson and Assistant U.S. Attorney Randall D. Eggert. It was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol,

Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the sheriff's departments of Laclede County, Pulaski County, Phelps County and Camden County, Mo., the Lebanon, Mo., Police Department and the Springfield, Mo., Police Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow/index.html