



U. S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
George E. B. Holding

Eastern District of North Carolina

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
TUESDAY - March 25, 2008

FAYETTEVILLE MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO ROBBERY AND FIREARM CHARGES

RALEIGH - United States Attorney George E.B. Holding announced that in federal court **STEVEN CRAIG BETHEA**, 40, of Fayetteville, North Carolina, pled guilty before United States District Judge James C. Dever, III, to possession of a firearm in furtherance of a conspiracy to commit robbery, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 924(c), and felon in possession of a firearm in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 922(g)(1).

On March 26, 2007, **BETHEA** and Robert Hampton Taylor traveled to the Kato Bingo Hall, located at 6113 Yadkin Road in Fayetteville, North Carolina to rob it. Fayetteville Police Officer Douglas Austin, who was on routine patrol, observed **BETHEA** and Robert Hampton Taylor in a vehicle bearing a fictitious tag. Officer Austin activated his blue lights in an attempt to stop the vehicle. Taylor crashed the vehicle, and **BETHEA** grabbed a firearm and fled on foot. **BETHEA** was captured a few hours later and his firearm was found. Officer Austin was shot and beaten in the head, by Taylor, which resulted in Officer Austin receiving 22 staples in his head. **BETHEA**, who is an Armed Career Criminal, faces not less than 5 years imprisonment nor more than life imprisonment on

the 924(c) charge and not less than 15 years imprisonment nor more than life imprisonment on the felon in possession charge and a \$250,000 fine.

Mr. Holding stated, ***"We continue to pledge to every district attorney, every sheriff, and every police chief in Eastern North Carolina that we will prosecute in federal court the armed criminals who plague our neighborhoods. We want to lock up once and for all the repeat offenders who have chosen a life of crime."***

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods, America's Network Against Gun Violence. Investigation of the case was conducted by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Fayetteville Police Department. Assistant United States Attorney Jane Jackson served as prosecutor for the government.

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