

NEWS RELEASE

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October 29, 2004

For Immediate Release

TWO ST. LOUIS MEN ARE SENTENCED TO 15 YEARS EACH IN PRISON ON WEAPONS CHARGES

St. Louis, Missouri: Two St. Louis area men each have been sentenced to more than 15 years in prison on firearms charges in two separate cases, United States Attorney James G. Martin announced today.

These cases were investigated by the St. Louis Metropolitan and County Police Departments and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

According to United States Attorney James G. Martin, these cases are a perfect example of the combined efforts of the U.S. Attorney's Office Violent Crime Unit, ATF and St. Louis Metropolitan and County Police Departments to prosecute those individuals who pose the most serious and imminent danger to society. Both defendants were sentenced under the Armed Career Criminal Statute. "We are trying very hard to get the word out that it isn't worth the risk for a felon to possess a gun. As is clear from these cases, those who do not heed the warning are paying a very significant price," said U.S. Attorney James G. Martin.

JOE HOWARD, 47, of the 5500 block of Chamberlain, St. Louis City, was sentenced to 188 months in prison, without parole. On June 29, 2004, Howard was convicted of one felony count of being a previously convicted felon in possession of a firearm. He appeared today for sentencing before United States District Judge Catherine D. Perry.

According to testimony presented at trial, Howard was firing a rifle and a handgun in the courtyard/parking area behind his apartment building on Chamberlain in the City of St. Louis. Howard appeared to be intoxicated at the time. Neighbors contacted the St. Louis Metropolitan Police who dispatched officers to investigate. Officers determined that Howard, the resident of one

of the apartments in an adjacent building, had been firing the weapons and obtained a search warrant. Officers executed the search warrant on March 13, 2003, the next day, and seized a .22 semi-automatic rifle. At trial, witnesses testified that Howard also had a semi-automatic handgun that he had hidden. Due to his previous criminal history Howard is forbidden by law to possess firearms.

MIJKIA CARL WHITTAKER, 27, of the 9900 block of Hobbits Glen Court, St. Louis, 63136, was sentenced to 188 months in prison, without parole. On April 27, 2004, Whittaker pled guilty to one felony count of being a previously convicted felon in possession of a firearm. He appeared this morning for sentencing before United States District Judge Charles A. Shaw.

According to the facts filed with the court at the time of the plea, in August 2003, an associate called St. Louis County police to report that Whittaker was in her home and was in possession of a firearm. She and three minor children left the home prior to the arrival of the police. When officers arrived they found Whittaker sleeping on the couch. A subsequent search revealed a fully 9 MM Luger pistol underneath the seat cushion of the couch. Due to his previous criminal history Whittaker is forbidden by law to possess firearms.