



CONTACT NUMBER: 815-987-4444

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**FIVE ROCKFORD MEN SENTENCED
ON FEDERAL ROBBERY AND FIREARMS CHARGES**

ROCKFORD -- PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; ANDREW L. TRAVER, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives; JOSEPH BRUSCATO, Winnebago County State's Attorney; and CHET EPPERSON, Chief of the Rockford Police Department, today made the following announcement:

The last of five Rockford men charged in federal court in connection with a series of armed robberies at eight Rockford businesses between July 3, 2007 and August 2, 2007, was sentenced today. The robberies were charged under the Hobbs Act, which prohibits robbery affecting interstate commerce. The five men are **CHARLES O. EUBANKS**, 21; **MICHAEL JACKSON**, 22; **THOMAS L. HAWKINS**, 22; **MARTEL D. MULLINS**, 20; and **MARK O. COOPER**, 21. The defendants, who have all been in custody since their arrests, have been sentenced as follows:

CHARLES O. EUBANKS pled guilty on June 4, 2008 to robbing the Englewood Beauty Supply located at 515 Marchesano Drive on July 31, 2007, as well as the Soto's Jewelry store located at 1126 South Main Street on August 2, 2007. Eubanks also pled guilty to one count of using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. As part of his plea agreement, Eubanks also stipulated that he robbed the Victory Lane Auto Sales at 2805 11th Street on July 20, 2007, and the RB's Auto Sales at 2701 11th Street on July 27, 2007. Eubanks was sentenced today to 276 months in federal prison without parole, to be followed by 5 years of supervised release. Eubanks was also ordered to pay \$6,043 in restitution.

MICHAEL JACKSON pled guilty on May 14, 2008 to robbing the Englewood Beauty Supply on July 31, 2007, as well as the Soto's Jewelry store on August 2, 2007. Jackson also pled guilty to one count of using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. As part of his plea agreement, Jackson also stipulated that he robbed the West State Food Mart at 2907 West State Street on July 3, 2007, and the Soto's Jewelry store another time on July 13, 2007. Jackson was sentenced on August 28, 2008 to 252 months in federal prison without parole, to be followed by 5 years of supervised release. Jackson was also ordered to pay \$10,700 in restitution.

THOMAS L. HAWKINS pled guilty on May 16, 2008 to robbing the Chase 8 Auto Sales located at 1711 Broadway on July 7, 2007, as well as the Victory Lane Auto Sales on July 20, 2007. Hawkins also pled guilty to one count of using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. As part of his plea agreement, Hawkins also stipulated that he robbed the West State Food Mart at 2907 West State Street on July 3, 2007, and the Checks for Cash store at 2949 11th Street on July 16, 2007. Hawkins was sentenced on September 4, 2008 to 136 months in federal prison without parole, to be followed by 5 years of supervised release. Hawkins was also ordered to pay \$7,953 in restitution.

MARTEL D. MULLINS pled guilty on May 22, 2008 to robbing the West State Food Mart on July 3, 2007, and to one count of using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. Mullins was sentenced on August 28, 2008 to 117 months in federal prison without parole, to be followed by 5 years of supervised release. Mullins was also ordered to pay \$3,000 in restitution.

MARK O. COOPER pled guilty June 13, 2008 to robbing the Soto's Jewelry store on August 2, 2007, as well as to using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence. Cooper was sentenced on September 22, 2008 to 155 months in federal prison without parole, to be followed by 5 years of supervised release. Cooper was also ordered to pay \$3,000 in restitution.

First charged by the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office under state law, these defendants were transferred to federal court where they were charged under tough federal firearms laws as part of the Project Safe Neighborhoods program. Project Safe Neighborhoods is an intensive, cooperative effort between local, state, and federal law enforcement to attack gun crimes. The cornerstone of the program is that every defendant charged in state court for an offense involving a gun will be reviewed for possible federal prosecution in order to obtain the harshest penalties for the worst offenders. Additional information about Project Safe Neighborhoods may be found at www.psn.gov.

The case was investigated by Special Agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives and detectives of the Rockford Police Department. The case was prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph C. Pedersen.

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