

NEWS RELEASE

**FROM: Catherine L. Hanaway
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PIEDMONT MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO UNLAWFUL POSSESSION OF A FIREARM

January 22, 2007

A Piedmont, Missouri, pled guilty today on charges of unlawful possession of a firearm, announced United States Attorney Catherine L. Hanaway.

JOHN B. McLAUGHLIN, age 41, pled guilty to one felony count of being a previously convicted felon in possession of a firearm. He appeared before United States District Judge E. Richard Webber.

On January 9, 2006, John B. McLaughlin was the driver of a Chevrolet pickup truck who had stopped for gas at a country store in Wayne County, Missouri. Mr. McLaughlin left the store without paying for the gas he had pumped into the truck.

The store clerk called law enforcement officers. The clerk reported a general description of the truck and told the officers that the driver was intoxicated and had a firearm in the cab of the truck.

A couple of hours later, a Missouri State Highway Patrolman on routine patrol observed a truck fitting the general description of the truck reported by the store clerk on Highway 67 in Madison County, Missouri. The officer activated his emergency lights and tried to stop the vehicle, but the driver sped up and would not pull over. Speeds during this chase exceeded 100 miles per hour.

The officer radioed ahead to ask other officers to take steps to help stop the truck. Another officer in St. Francois County, Missouri, put out a device in the highway to puncture the truck's tires. The pickup ran over one of these devices and its tires went flat. Shortly thereafter, the driver of the truck pulled the truck into the median of the highway and stopped. The driver, John B. McLaughlin, was arrested at the scene.

The officers discovered a Hi-Point, 9x19mm caliber rifle in the truck, along with some .22 caliber ammunition and some 9mm ammunition. The firearm was improperly loaded with .22 caliber ammunition and had one round jammed in the chamber. The officers also discovered that the truck was stolen by Mr. McLaughlin earlier in the day along with the rifle that was in the cab of the truck when it was stolen. The owner was contacted. He reported that the firearm was not loaded with any ammunition when it was taken from his custody.

Mr. McLaughlin was interviewed after his arrest. He admitted stealing the truck.

Due to McLaughlin's previous felony convictions, he is prohibited by law from possessing firearms.

McLaughlin now faces a maximum punishment of ten years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Sentencing has been set for April 23, 2007.

Hanaway praised the Missouri State Highway Patrol and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) for their work on the case. Assistant United States Attorney Keith D. Sorrell handled the prosecution for the Government.