



CONTACT: ATF Special Agent Thomas Ahern
(312) - 846-7228
AUSA Mark Karner
(815) – 987-4444

February 1, 2007

FEDERAL JURY FINDS ROCKFORD MAN GUILTY OF POSSESSING WITH INTENT TO DISTRIBUTE HEROIN, BEING A FELON IN POSSESSION OF A FIREARM AND POSSESSION A FIREARM IN FURTHERANCE OF A DRUG TRAFFICKING OFFENSE

ROCKFORD – PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; ANDREW L. TRAVER, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF); PAUL A. LOGLI, Winnebago County State’s Attorney; RICHARD MEYERS, Winnebago County Sheriff; and CHESTER EPPERSON, Chief of the Rockford Police Department, today made the following announcement:

Following a three-day trial, a federal jury in Rockford yesterday found **LONNIE D. MORRIS**, 40 (DOB: 2/22/66), Rockford, guilty of possession, with the intent to distribute heroin, being a felon in possession of a firearm and of possession of a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking.

A federal indictment had charged that on June 2, 2005, Morris, who had previously been convicted of a felony, knowingly possessed a .22 caliber semiautomatic handgun that had traveled across state lines prior to his possession of it. The indictment had also charged that he possessed, with intent to deliver, 23.7 grams of heroin on the premises of 707 Albert Avenue and that he had possessed the .22 caliber handgun in furtherance of that drug trafficking offense.

Sentencing for Morris will be scheduled at a later date by the District Court. Morris faces a term of imprisonment of not more than 20 years on the charge of possessing, with intent to distribute, heroin, and not more than 10 years for the charge of being a felon in possession of a firearm. Because Morris possessed the .22 caliber handgun in furtherance of a drug crime, Morris must also be sentenced to a five year term of imprisonment. Morris will not be eligible for parole. Morris also will be sentenced to a period of supervised release of 3 to 5 years

following release from prison. The actual sentence will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

First charged by the Winnebago County States Attorney's Office under state law, Morris was transferred to federal court where he was 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 the Rockford Office of the ATF and the Rockford Police Department/Winnebago County Sheriff's Police Department. The case is being prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorneys Mark T. Karner and Michael F. Iasparro.

#####