



# NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY  
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

## TODD P. GRAVES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### UPDATE: PROJECT CEASEFIRE CLAY COUNTY, INDEPENDENCE, BELTON MEN SENTENCED FOR ILLEGAL POSSESSION OF FIREARMS

**KANSAS CITY, Mo.** - Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that three defendants were sentenced in federal court today, in separate and unrelated cases, for illegally possessing firearms.

\* **Rodney D. Taylor**, 44, of Clay County, was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Gary A. Fenner this morning to three years and 10 months in federal prison without parole for being a felon in possession of two firearms.

On June 29, 2004, **Taylor** pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of two firearms. By pleading guilty, **Taylor** admitted that he was in possession of a Winchester .410-gauge shotgun and a Sears and Roebuck Ted Williams 30-30 rifle on March 26, 2004. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Taylor** has two 1989 criminal felony convictions for arson and burglary in Clay County.

**Taylor** was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on April 20, 2004, in Kansas City.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bruce E. Clark. It was investigated by the Clay County, Mo., Sheriff's Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

\* **Jeremy Whitley**, 25, of Independence, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Ortrie D. Smith this morning to one year in federal prison without parole for being an unlawful user of a controlled substance in possession of a firearm.

On Aug. 6, 2004, **Whitley** pleaded guilty to being a user of methamphetamine in possession of a Taurus .38-caliber Special revolver on Oct. 29, 2003. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any addict or user of a controlled substance to be in possession of a firearm.

**Whitley** was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on April 6, 2004, in Kansas City.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bruce E. Clark. It was investigated by the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

\* **Steven S. Coats**, 45, of Belton, Mo., was sentenced by U.S. District Judge Ortrie D. Smith this morning to five months in federal prison without parole for being a felon in possession of a firearm.

On Aug. 6, 2004, **Coats** pleaded guilty to being a felon in possession of a firearm. By pleading guilty, **Coats** admitted that he was in possession of a Rexio Fabrica De Armas .38-caliber revolver on March 24, 2004. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. **Coats** has a 1986 criminal felony conviction for the illegal sale of cocaine.

**Coats** was originally charged in an indictment returned by a federal grand jury on May 18, 2004, in Kansas City.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bruce E. Clark. It was investigated by the Independence, Mo., Police Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

### **Project Ceasefire**

Project Ceasefire, launched in October 1999, is a cooperative initiative by federal and local law enforcement and the Kansas City Crime Commission that targets for federal prosecution persons who unlawfully use or possess firearms.

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This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at [www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow)

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