



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA

ALEXANDRIA NEWPORT NEWS NORFOLK RICHMOND

CHUCK ROSENBERG, UNITED STATES ATTORNEY

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Jim Rybicki
Public Information Officer
Phone: (703) 842-4050 Fax: (703) 549-5202
E-Mail: usavae.press@usdoj.gov
Website: www.usdoj.gov/usao/vae

Further Information Contact
Deanna Warren
Phone: (757) 441-6331

Two Newport News Men Plead Guilty to Area Armed Robberies

(Newport News, Virginia) – Gary Lee Cooper, age 22 and Jerome Leroy Robertson, age 22, both of Newport News, Virginia, each pled guilty yesterday to two counts of robbery and two counts of using a firearm during the course of a violent crime. Cooper and Robertson were previously named in a 12 count indictment charging six robberies and the related firearm charges. Chuck Rosenberg, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced the convictions.

Court documents reveal that Cooper and Robertson were charged with the armed robbery of the Dollar General in Williamsburg, Virginia, on February 13, 2006; the Auto Zone in Hampton, Virginia, on January 20, 2006; the Advance Auto in Hampton, Virginia, on December 26, 2005; the Dollar General in Newport News, Virginia, on December 18, 2005; the Dollar General in Hampton, Virginia, on November 14, 2005; and the Auto Zone in Hampton, Virginia, on October 14, 2005. During each robbery, Cooper and Robertson wore face coverings, were armed with handguns, and bound the employees and customers of the businesses.

During the February 13, 2006 robbery in Williamsburg, a witness saw the license plate of the getaway car. The car was traced to Enterprise Rental, and when it was returned, Cooper was arrested. Cooper made admissions and implicated Robertson in the robberies. Robertson was then arrested and a search of his house revealed several black ski masks like the ones worn in the robberies, a Kel-tec handgun similar in appearance to the one used in the Williamsburg robbery, and a number of cell phones. Robertson was advised of his rights and admitted to participating in the robberies with Cooper. Robertson also admitted that the recovered firearm was the one used in the Williamsburg robbery.

The charges to which Cooper and Robertson pled guilty carry a mandatory minimum sentence of 32 years in prison with a maximum sentence of life in prison. The sentencing is set for February 21, 2007.

The case was investigated by the James City County Police Department, the Newport News Police Department, the Hampton Police Division, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the Peninsula Resident Agency of the Norfolk Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Assistant United States Attorney Eric M. Hurt is prosecuting the case for the United States.

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