



NEWS RELEASE

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WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JURY CONVICTS SPRINGFIELD MAN OF FIREARMS VIOLATION AFTER THREATENING WORKERS AT HOMELESS SHELTER

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced today that a Springfield, Mo., man has been convicted by a trial jury of violating federal firearms law after he threatened workers at a homeless shelter with a Derringer.

James W. Bell, 36, of Springfield, Mo., was found guilty of being a felon in possession of a firearm on Sept. 22, 2003. **Bell** was indicted by a federal grand jury on June 4, 2003. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal for any felon to be in possession of any firearm or ammunition. Bell has a 1986 criminal felony conviction for robbery in Mississippi County, Ark. He was indicted for being in possession of a Davis Industries .22 caliber Derringer on April 25, 2003.

The jury in U.S. District Court in Springfield deliberated about 25 minutes before returning the guilty verdict to U.S. District Judge Richard E. Dorr, Graves said, ending a trial that began the same day.

Bell was arrested at the Missouri Hotel, a shelter located at 420 East Commercial Street in Springfield, on April 25, 2003. **Bell** walked into the office of one of the case managers that day, Graves said, and asked to speak to David Bodine, the shelter's coordinator of residential and social services, about an urgent matter. **Bell** laid the Derringer on her desk, pointed in her direction, and demanded to speak to Bodine.

When Bodine arrived at the office, Graves said, **Bell** pulled the Derringer from his pocket and pointed the handgun directly at Bodine's chest. Bodine, a former police officer, quickly disarmed **Bell** and the case manager called the police. Bodine, who kept **Bell** in the office until police officers arrived, also found a box of .22 caliber ammunition in **Bell's** pocket.

As a result of his conviction, **Bell** could be subject to a sentence of up to 10 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$250,000. The sentence will be determined according to the United States Sentencing Guidelines. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the U.S. Probation Office.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney James J. Kelleher. It was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Springfield, Mo., Police Department.

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