

## Rocky Mount Man Sentenced To 17 Years In Federal Prison For Violent Robberies

By Administrator

Friday, 15 February 2019 10:06 - Last Updated Friday, 15 February 2019 10:14

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Senior United States District Judge Malcolm J. Howard sentenced Darius Coty Whitaker, 24, to 204 months imprisonment followed by 5 years of supervised release. Whitaker was named in an eight-count Indictment filed on April 27, 2017. On December 7, 2017, Whitaker pled guilty to one-count each of Brandishing a Firearm in Furtherance of a Crime of Violence and Discharging a Firearm in Furtherance of a Crime of Violence.

An investigation conducted by the Rocky Mount Police Department (RMPD)

determined that WHITAKER, armed with a handgun, robbed four businesses in the Rocky Mount area from September 6, 2016, to September 15, 2016. On September 19, 2016, an anonymous caller informed the RMPD that WHITAKER appeared to be the suspect in a surveillance video depicting one of the robberies. On September 23, 2016, WHITAKER confessed to law enforcement officials that he committed the four robberies because he was looking for money to buy cocaine. WHITAKER further admitted that he had previously stolen the two firearms he used during the robberies.

The evidence showed that a Dollar Tree employee of the store on Cobb Corners was approaching her vehicle in the parking lot when WHITAKER confronted the employee and demanded she give him the store's money. When the clerk told WHITAKER she did not have any money, he pulled a stolen handgun from his waistband, pointed it at her, and threatened her with bodily harm. After rifling through her pocketbook and not finding any money, WHITAKER stated, "I know your name, if you call the cops, I'll come back for you." WHITAKER then fled the scene on foot.

WHITAKER, armed with a stolen loaded .38 caliber revolver, entered Marathon Gas Station in Battleboro, North Carolina and jumped over the counter. WHITAKER then pointed the firearm at the store clerk's head and ordered that he open the cash register. As WHITAKER began to approach the register, the clerk grabbed WHITAKER's firearm. A ground struggle ensued, during which WHITAKER hit the employee several times with his fist and also discharged a firearm round that struck the floor. The employee then bit WHITAKER, causing him to drop the firearm. During the altercation, another store employee activated the security alarm. WHITAKER was able to steal the clerk's cellphone, identification card, and credit card, before fleeing the scene on foot.

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a program bringing together all levels of law enforcement and the communities they serve to reduce

violent crime and make our neighborhoods safer for everyone. Since 2017 the United States

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Department of Justice has reinvigorated the PSN program and has targeted violent criminals, directing all U.S. Attorney's Offices to work in partnership with federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement and the local community to develop effective, locally-based strategies to reduce violent crime.

That effort has been implemented through the Take Back North Carolina Initiative of The United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of North Carolina. This initiative emphasizes the regional assignment of federal prosecutors to work with law enforcement and District Attorney's Offices on a sustained basis in those communities to reduce the violent crime rate, drug trafficking, and crimes against law enforcement.

The case was investigated by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives (ATF), Nash County Sheriff's Office, Rocky Mount Police Department, and the Halifax County Sheriff's Office. Assistant United States Attorney James Kurosad prosecuted the case on behalf of the United States.