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**ROCKFORD MAN SENTENCED TO 390 MONTHS IN FEDERAL PRISON
ON FIREARMS AND DRUG CHARGES**

ROCKFORD — A Rockford man was sentenced today in federal court by U.S. District Judge Frederick J. Kapala on federal firearms and drug charges. Alex Alexander, 30, was sentenced to 120 months in prison for possessing marijuana with intent to distribute, 200 months in prison for being a felon in possession of a firearm, and 70 months in prison for possessing a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking offense, for a total of 390 months in federal prison without parole.

Alexander was arrested on February 7, 2012, following a traffic stop conducted by officers of the City of Rockford Police Department. During this stop, the defendant, a convicted felon, was found in possession of baggies containing marijuana, drug trafficking paraphernalia and a loaded 45 caliber semiautomatic handgun. Alexander was convicted on May 4, 2012, after a three-day jury trial in federal court in Rockford. In imposing the sentence, Judge Kapala found that Alexander was a “career offender,” which resulted in Alexander receiving a higher sentence because of his prior criminal record. In addition, Alexander was sentenced as an “armed career criminal” under a federal firearm law mandating non-paroleable prison sentences of 15 years or more for felons with extensive records of prior convictions who illegally possess or sell guns. Alexander was also ordered to serve 5 years of supervised release following his release from prison.

First charged by the Winnebago County States Attorney’s Office under state law, Alexander 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 sentencing was announced by Gary S. Shapiro, Acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; W. Larry Ford, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Field Division of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives; Joseph Bruscato, Winnebago County State's Attorney; and Chet Epperson, Chief of the Rockford Police Department.

The government was represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mark Karner and Scott Paccagnini.

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