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MAGNOLIA, NEW JERSEY MAN CONVICTED OF ARMED BANK ROBBERIES

TRENTON, N.J. – A federal jury convicted a Magnolia, New Jersey man yesterday of committing three armed bank robberies in Ocean and Monmouth Counties, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Steven L. Baker, 39, was convicted of all six counts in an Indictment charging that he committed the armed bank robberies of the Investors Savings Bank in Lakewood, New Jersey on September 24, 2009; the PNC Bank in Brick, New Jersey on November 9, 2009; and the First Atlantic Federal Credit Union in Neptune, New Jersey on January 13, 2010; and that he used and carried a firearm during each of those robberies.

During the trial, the jury heard testimony and viewed evidence about how Baker and his co-conspirator, Deshawn Clayton, 33, of Ocean Grove, committed each of those robberies. Baker and Clayton entered each bank wearing masks and gloves to conceal their identities. Baker stayed in the lobbies of the banks with a pistol while Clayton vaulted the teller counters and looted money from the teller drawers. While Clayton was looting the teller drawers, Baker threatened bank employees in two of the three robberies, stating “It’s not your money, it ain’t worth dying for.” After each robbery, Baker and Clayton fled the banks in a getaway car.

Clayton had previously pleaded guilty to committing the armed robbery of the First Atlantic Federal Credit Union and will be sentenced at a date to be determined for committing all three armed robberies.

Baker is facing a statutory maximum sentence of 25 years in prison for each count of armed bank robbery. For the first count of using and carrying a firearm, Baker is facing a statutory mandatory minimum sentence of seven years of imprisonment and a statutory maximum sentence of life imprisonment. For each of the second two counts of using and carrying a firearm, Baker is facing a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years of imprisonment and a statutory maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

Chief United States District Judge Garrett E. Brown, Jr., who presided over the six day trial, scheduled sentencing for November 15, 2010.

In determining the actual sentence, Chief Judge Brown will consult the advisory U.S. Sentencing Guidelines, which provide appropriate sentencing ranges that take into account the severity and characteristics of the offenses, the defendant’s criminal history, if any, and other factors. The court, however, is not bound by those guidelines in determining the sentence.

Parole has been abolished in the federal system. Defendants who are given custodial terms must serve nearly all that time.

Fishman credited Special Agents of the FBI's Red Bank Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Michael Ward in Newark; Investigators with the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Luis A. Valentin; Investigators from the Ocean County Sheriff's Office, under the direction of Sheriff William L. Polhemus; and police officers with the Lakewood, Brick, and Neptune Township Police Departments, for the investigation leading to the conviction.

The Government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Harvey Bartle of the Criminal Division in Trenton, and Ronald Chillemi of the Criminal Division in Newark.

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Defense counsel: Robin Kay Lord, Esquire, Trenton