

State of South Carolina
Solicitor, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

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W. Walter Wilkins

PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

September 1, 2015

**Simpsonville Man Sentenced on Carjacking, Kidnapping, Armed Robbery,
and Attempted Armed Robbery Charges**

Thirteenth Circuit Solicitor Walt Wilkins states that Defendant RICKY ALLEN COTA, age 26, pled guilty on September 1, 2015 to Carjacking, Kidnapping, Armed Robbery, and Possession of a Weapon During the Commission of a Violent Crime that occurred on August 17, 2013, as well as Attempted Armed Robbery and Possession of a Weapon During the Commission of a Violent Crime, and DUI 2nd Offense charges that occurred on May 16, 2014. Following his guilty plea to these charges, RICKY ALLEN COTA was sentenced to 18 years in the South Carolina Department of Corrections by the Honorable Garrison D. Hill.

Evidence presented at the plea hearing by Deputy Solicitor Andrew Culbreath established that on August 17, 2013 at approximately 9:30 am, the Defendant approached a young man leaving the Spinx convenience store on Fairview Road in Simpsonville and asked if he could have a ride. The young man agreed, and as they traveled down Fairview Road the Defendant pulled out a pistol and robbed the victim of cash and his bank ATM card. The Defendant then demanded that the victim drive him to an ATM where he could withdraw additional money from the victim's bank account. The Defendant held the victim at gunpoint in the car as they travelled down West Georgia Road and repeatedly threatened to kill the victim. As the victim drove past the Food Lion grocery store near West Georgia and Neely Ferry Road, the victim decided to intentionally ram his vehicle into a telephone pole in an effort to incapacitate the Defendant and escape. Following the crash, the Defendant physically attacked the

victim and then fled the accident scene on foot. Investigators with the Simpsonville Police Department arrived on scene and quickly located the Defendant lying down in the back of a cab seen pulling out from behind the Food Lion grocery store a short time after the accident. Both the defendant and victim required medical treatment following the crash and were taken to area hospitals. The pistol recovered from the victim's vehicle following the crash turned out to be a B-B pistol.

While out on bond on his August 17, 2013 charges, the Defendant entered the Bi-Lo grocery store on Hwy 14 in Simpsonville in the early morning hours of May 16, 2014. He approached the store clerk as if he were going to buy a drink. However, instead of making a purchase the Defendant pulled a pistol from his pants, pointed it at the clerk, and demanded she give him all the money in the register. At that moment another customer walked into the store distracting the Defendant as he turned away from the victim to observe the customer. When the Defendant looked away from the clerk, the clerk began yelling for help and the Defendant ran from the store. The defendant drove away from the store and ultimately wrecked his vehicle on Fork Shoals Road. The South Carolina Highway Patrol responded to the wreck and located the defendant who smelled strongly of an alcoholic beverage. The store clerk was able to positively identify the Defendant as the man who attempted to rob her at the Bi-Lo earlier. The Defendant was charged with Attempted Armed Robbery and Possession of a Weapon During the Commission of a Violent Crime, as well as DUI 2nd Offense.

Defendant RICKY ALLEN COTA will have to serve at least 85 % of the 18 year sentence before he becomes eligible for parole.