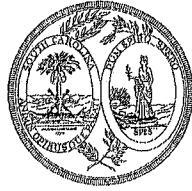


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PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

November 9, 2016

Man Sentenced to 10 Years for Armed Robbery at Gas Station

Thirteenth Circuit Solicitor Walt Wilkins states that James Benjamin Copelan, 28, pled guilty on November 9, 2016, to Armed Robbery. The Honorable Letitia Verdin sentenced Copelan to ten years in the South Carolina Department of Corrections.

Evidence presented at the hearing by Assistant Solicitor Allen Fretwell established on May 16, 2015, that a co-defendant, Michall Gray entered the Power Trac gas station on Bessie Road in Greenville County, wearing a ski mask and armed with a bat and a long-blade knife. Once inside, Gray jumped over the counter and ordered the victim to open the register. Gray grabbed approximately \$700 in currency and fled the store. Through the course of investigation, law enforcement learned that the getaway vehicle was parked at a closed business during the robbery. Authorities located the suspect vehicle, driven by Copelan, who admitted he was with Gray and that Gray had robbed the store.

According to Assistant Solicitor Fretwell, Gray confessed to committing the robbery upon his arrest and told police the robbery was Copelan's idea. According to Gray, Copelan selected the store and provided Gray with gloves and a mask. Copelan was captured on store surveillance going into the store, shortly before the robbery, and, according to Gray, told him to commit the robbery immediately. Gray informed police that Copelan was supposed to dispose of the mask and gloves by burning them.

According to Wilkins, Gray will serve at least eighty-five percent of his sentence. Gray pled guilty earlier this year and was sentenced to twelve years in prison.