



Department of Justice

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Eastern District of Virginia**

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[Eastern District of Virginia](#)

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Man Pleads Guilty to Armed Robbery and Armed Drug Trafficking

RICHMOND, Va. – A Norfolk man pleaded guilty today to the armed robbery of Sprint store in Colonial Heights and three separate instances of armed drug trafficking in Norfolk.

According to court documents, Tajh Rodgers, 29, admitting to working with an accomplice to commit a violent armed robbery of a Sprint Store in Colonial Heights in January. During the robbery, Rodgers and his co-conspirator ordered two employees to the back of the store at gunpoint, where the robbers forced them to lie on the floor. Due to a time-delay lock on the store's safe, the robbers had to wait several minutes for the safe to open. While waiting, they attempted to tie up the employees and threatened to kill them if they attempted to notify the police. Soon thereafter, a customer entered the store, and the robbers let one of the employees go to assist the customer, along with a warning that he would be killed if he tried to alert the customer about the crime. Soon after the customer left, the time-delay lock on the safe opened, allowing the robbers to steal a number of new phones and electronics from the store. A total of 72 items valued at approximately \$25,000 were stolen from the store.

The investigation led to the identification of Rodgers as a suspect, and his connection to another drug trafficking investigation in Norfolk where he engaged in several armed drug transactions during which he sold fentanyl, crack cocaine, and firearms to cooperating sources. Specifically, on Dec. 13, 2018, Rodgers sold cocaine base, fentanyl, and a .38 caliber Smith & Wesson revolver to cooperating sources. On January 3, he sold two bundles of fentanyl and a 9mm Springfield semi-automatic pistol to cooperating sources. During both drug transactions, Rodgers was armed with the same .40 caliber Ruger semi-automatic pistol that he carried during the armed robbery of the Sprint store. After identifying Rodgers as the robbery suspect, investigators obtained a search warrant for the location he was living at in Norfolk. During the search on January 10, officers recovered the .40 caliber semi-automatic pistol, various items connected to the Sprint store robbery, and a number of items connected to Rodgers' ongoing drug trafficking, including distribution quantities of fentanyl, marijuana, crack cocaine, and a plastic safe containing a digital scale with suspected narcotics residue and packaging material.

Rodgers pleaded guilty to robbery affecting commerce, using, carrying, and brandishing a firearm during a robbery, and three counts of possession of a firearm in furtherance of drug trafficking. For the robbery offense, he faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison. For the firearms charges, he faces a mandatory minimum of 22 years, and a maximum of life in prison when sentenced on

Jan. 9, 2020. Actual sentences for federal crimes are typically less than the maximum penalties. A federal district court judge will determine any sentence after taking into account the U.S. Sentencing Guidelines and other statutory factors.

G. Zachary Terwilliger, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; Ashan M. Benedict, Special Agent in Charge of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives' (ATF) Washington Field Division; Colonel Jeffrey W. Faries, Chief of Colonial Heights Police; Larry D. Boone, Chief of Norfolk Police, made the announcement after Senior U.S. District Judge Robert E. Payne accepted the plea. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Michael Gill, Kenneth Simon, and William B. Jackson are prosecuting the case.

This case is part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), which is the centerpiece of the Department of Justice's violent crime reduction efforts. PSN is an evidence-based program proven to be effective at reducing violent crime. Through PSN, a broad spectrum of stakeholders work together to identify the most pressing violent crime problems in the community and develop comprehensive solutions to address them. As part of this strategy, PSN focuses enforcement efforts on the most violent offenders and partners with locally based prevention and reentry programs for lasting reductions in crime.

A copy of this press release is located on the website of the [U.S. Attorney's Office](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia. Related court documents and information are located on the website of the [District Court](#) for the Eastern District of Virginia or on [PACER](#) by searching for Case No. 3:19-cr-111.

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