



U.S. Department of Justice

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Grand Rapids, Michigan – March 16, 2006 – United States Attorney Margaret M.

Chiara announced that on March 14, 2006, after a two-day trial, a federal jury found Defendant Robert Willis, age 38, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, guilty of distributing crack cocaine, distributing crack cocaine within one thousand feet of a school, and of being a felon in possession of a firearm. Willis was found to have delivered crack cocaine to an undercover law enforcement agent near the St. Francis-Xavier and Dickinson Elementary schools in Southeast Grand Rapids on July 13, 2004. The police were unable to locate and apprehend him until September 24, 2005, at which time they discovered he had a firearm in his possession. Willis faces up to 60 years in prison on the crack cocaine delivery convictions. Because of his criminal record, he qualifies as an Armed Career Criminal under federal law and faces a minimum of fifteen years and a maximum of life in prison on the firearm conviction.

The conviction follows a federal investigation of the distribution of controlled substances and possession of firearms in areas near schools and playgrounds on the Southeast side of Grand Rapids. During the time law enforcement was looking for Willis, his co-defendants in the case were caught, convicted and sentenced. Duayne Saffore, Anthony Anderson and Jimmy Smith were previously sentenced for drug dealing near the same elementary schools to fifteen years and

eight months in prison. Co-defendant Falcia Brown received a sentence of three years and ten months.

United States Attorney Chiara commended the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Grand Rapids Police Department for their work on the case. The case was prosecuted on behalf of the United States of America by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Andrew Byerly Birge and Phillip J. Green

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