

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

JURY CONVICTS SALINAS MAN OF PREMEDITATED ATTEMPTED MURDER, ARMED ROBBERY AND SHOOTING AT AN INHABITED DWELLING CAUSING GREAT BODILY INJURY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced that late on Monday, November 5, a jury convicted Mark Morris, age 27, a resident of Salinas, of premeditated attempted murder using a firearm, robbery at gunpoint, shooting at an inhabited dwelling causing great bodily injury, intimidation of witnesses and possession of a firearm and ammunition as a felon.

On January 3, 2017 at approximately 7:35 in the evening, Morris walked into Quality Market located at 201 Williams Road with a blue bandana covering his face. Morris was wearing a beanie and a hoodie covering his head. Upon entering Quality Market, Defendant pulled out a large revolver and pointed it at the owner of the store, 63-year old Michael Filice. Defendant demanded that Filice empty the registers, give him the money and not to “try anything.” Defendant waived the gun at the female clerk, Rosa Dozal, threatening Dozal and Filice that if they “tried anything,” he would “blow them away.” Defendant took approximately \$1000 in cash, and walked out of the store.

After walking out of the store, Morris waited for Filice outside, hiding behind a partition. Filice followed Morris outside, carrying a semi-automatic handgun. Immediately upon seeing Filice, Morris fired at Filice twice, intending to kill him. Morris then fled, with Filice running after him on E. Market Street. A shootout ensued, with Morris firing back at Filice several times and Filice returning fire.

One of the rounds fired by Morris pierced through a residential trailer located on Williams Road where Raul Rodriguez lived with his wife and two young daughters. As Rodriguez watched TV, one of Morris’s fired rounds struck Mr. Rodriguez’s shoulder causing bone fractures and exited his body, penetrating the opposite wall of the trailer.

Within minutes of the robbery, Salinas Police Department (SPD) officers responded to Quality Market. One of the store clerks who witnessed the robbery found a single car key on a key fob that Morris had dropped while he was robbing the store. An SPD officer conducted a “sweep” of the area near the Market and located a gray 2002 Toyota Camry parked a few feet away from the store. The car was registered to Morris’s mother.

SPD detectives searched the car and found a backpack, several white cloth gloves and a two boxes of American Eagle brand .44 magnum caliber ammunition, as well as Sig Sauer brand ammunition designed for a revolver. The detectives also found a black beanie matching the beanie worn by the robber in the surveillance. Additionally, the detectives located paystubs in Morris’s name and address. Morris’s right thumbprint was found on the American Eagle brand box of ammunition. However, the fired bullet that went through the trailer was determined to have come from the Sig Sauer brand box of ammunition which had no fingerprints. No eyewitness could ID the robber.

Monterey County Probation officers conducted a probation search of Morris’s residence. During the search, they found several white cloth gloves in Morris’s bedroom drawer. The white cloth gloves matched the white gloves located inside the car, as well as the white gloves worn by Morris during the robbery.

The next day, Morris called SPD and left voicemails, reporting his car stolen. At trial, Morris testified that he did not commit the robbery, but admitted he had driven the car before. According to the defense case, someone else drove the car to the location near the Quality Market.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), conducted a cellular analysis of Morris’s cell phone records. The records showed that Morris’s phone was used near Quality Market 13 minutes after the crime. Morris explained the presence of his phone by telling the jury that he went to look for his car near Quality Market after his sister informed him that she had taken the car. DNA mixtures matching Morris and two to three other males were found on the beanie, ski mask and the gloves.

Morris stands convicted of four strike offenses and is facing a lifetime imprisonment at his sentencing hearing scheduled for December 20, 2018 in Department 4, before Judge Carrie M. Panetta.