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United States Attorney's Office
District of Oregon

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Contact: Public Affairs Officer
Phone: (503) 727-1000
USAOR.PublicAffairs@usdoj.gov

**Salem Man Sentenced to Federal Prison for Illegally Possessing a Firearm
While on Post-Prison Supervision**

PORTLAND, Ore.—A Salem, Oregon man was sentenced to federal prison today for illegally possessing a firearm as a convicted felon.

Bernard McEllen Welch, 33, was sentenced to 120 months in prison and three years' supervised release.

According to court documents, on May 21, 2020, a Salem Police officer pulled a car over for a traffic violation when Welch jumped from the vehicle's rear passenger door and ran away. The officer called for backup and stayed with the vehicle. A nearby resident alerted police that a man had jumped into his backyard. Officers searched the area and located Welch hiding under a bush.

After Welch was arrested, officers returned to the home where the resident had reported seeing Welch enter his backyard. They located a discarded pistol with an obliterated serial number and a chambered round. In an adjacent property, they located a loaded magazine compatible with the pistol. Investigators at the Oregon State Forensic Laboratory later matched DNA found on the firearm with a sample collected from Welch.

At the time of his arrest, Welch had prior state felony convictions for assaulting a public safety officer, second-degree robbery with a firearm, third-degree assault, and third-degree robbery.

On August 5, 2020, a federal grand jury in Portland returned a one-count indictment charging Welch with illegally possessing a firearm as a convicted felon. On September 16, 2021, he pleaded guilty to the single charge.

This case was investigated by the Salem Police Department with assistance from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF). It was prosecuted by the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). PSN 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.

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