

United States Department of Justice

For Immediate Release

August 4, 2010 United States Attorney's Office
Northern District of California

Leader of Oakland-Based Armed Robbery Crew Sentenced to More Than 22 Years in Prison

OAKLAND, CA—Kao Saeturn was sentenced today by United States District Judge Claudia Wilken to 272 months in prison for leading a robbery crew that committed a series of armed robberies targeting small businesses and their customers throughout the Bay Area, United States Attorney Joseph P. Russoniello announced.

According to court documents, Saeturn, 29, of Richmond, Calif., was a parolee-at-large when he led an armed robbery crew to commit several robberies and an attempted carjacking between December 2007 and January 2008. During these robberies, the victims (many of whom were teenage girls) were held at gunpoint, threatened with death, and physically restrained. Saeturn and his crew typically took the victims' cash, credit/debit cards, and identifications, and used the proceeds to buy methamphetamine which Saeturn and his crew smoked habitually.

“The nature of this investigation and prosecution once again demonstrates the inexorable connection between drugs and violence in our society,” stated U.S. Attorney Russoniello. “This prosecution also highlights the federal government’s commitment to working with our local partners in law enforcement—combining our resources, skills, and efforts to identify, apprehend, and bring to justice those who use guns and violence to victimize innocent people.”

“Without question, one of ATF’s top priorities is to combat violent crime and keep guns out of the hands of violent criminals. Today’s sentencing of Kao Saeturn to prison ensures he will no longer be free to wreak havoc in our streets and threaten the safety and security of our communities,” said ATF Special Agent-in-Charge Stephen C. Herkins.

The first robbery occurred in San Rafael, Calif., on Dec. 30, 2007. According to court documents, on that date, Saeturn and his co-conspirators San “Forty” Saephan, Davis Kiet Dang, and Jantar “Kelly” Phun traveled from Oakland to a massage parlor in San Rafael. Saeturn, Saephan, and Dang went inside the business, and Saeturn pointed a Glock 17 pistol at a woman and demanded her money. After taking her purse and a necklace, the entire group drove back to Oakland to divide up the robbery proceeds and smoke methamphetamine.

The second robbery occurred about one week later on Jan. 6, 2008. According to court documents, on that date the same group robbed a professional massage business in El Cerrito. Again, Saeturn, Saephan, and Dang went inside the business. Once inside, Saeturn kicked open the office door and pointed his Glock at two women and took their money. Meanwhile, Saephan and Dang went into one of the private massage rooms where they encountered a male customer

lying face down on a massage table. Saephan pointed a replica firearm at the man and demanded his money while Dang attempted to bind the man's hands behind his back with duct tape. Saeturn eventually ordered that they leave, and the three robbers fled.

According to court documents, just two nights later, on Jan. 8, 2008, Saeturn, Saephan, and Soeung "Goofy" Mouv robbed a karaoke club in Hayward. Saeturn and Saephan went to a room and robbed four teenage girls and a 53-year-old man at gunpoint. Saeturn and Saephan made the man get on his knees and put his hands behind his back. They then tied the man's hands behind his back and his ankles together with microphone cord and pointed a gun at his head. Mouv pointed a .38 caliber revolver at another man's stomach, forced him into another room, and tied his hands behind his back and his ankles together using microphone cord. After robbing two more teenage girls and another man at gunpoint, Saeturn and Saephan encountered a woman and grabbed her and tried to force her into a dark room. The woman resisted by grabbing onto a door frame. Saeturn and Saephan broke the woman's collarbone in the process of ripping her purse off her shoulder and then ran out of the business.

According to court documents, on Jan. 22, 2008, Saeturn attempted to carjack a truck on the freeway. At approximately 3:45 p.m., Saeturn was driving on Interstate 580 in the Richmond area. Accompanying Saeturn in the vehicle was an associate, Choung Nguyen. Saeturn crashed into the car ahead of him on the freeway. Saeturn and Nguyen got out of the car and ran across the freeway to the right shoulder. A retired female San Francisco Deputy Sheriff saw the men running to the shoulder and pulled her truck over to help. Eventually, Saeturn ordered the woman to open the door and pulled out his Glock pistol. The woman drove away and Saeturn and Nguyen fled.

According to court documents, in Jan. 2008, Saeturn made numerous calls to his girlfriend, who was at that time housed in Santa Rita Jail in Dublin, which were routinely recorded. In these calls Saeturn bragged about the robberies he was committing, claimed he was the "King of Oakland," and said that the police could not touch him because he would shoot them.

On Feb. 7, 2008, CHP and OPD learned that Saeturn was in the basement of a home located on East 24th Street in Oakland. Numerous units responded and eventually an OPD SWAT Team was called in. Saeturn and several other individuals, including Choung Nguyen, exited the basement and were arrested. Saeturn's Glock 17 was recovered inside the basement along with another firearm.

On July 16, 2008, a federal grand jury returned a second superseding indictment charging Saeturn with one count of conspiracy to interfere with commerce by robbery and extortion; three counts of interference with commerce by robbery and extortion; one count of attempted carjacking, and four counts of using, carrying, and brandishing a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1951(a), 2119, and 924(c)(1)(A)(ii). On Oct. 28, 2009, Saeturn pleaded guilty pursuant to a plea agreement to one count of conspiracy to interfere with commerce by robbery and extortion; three counts of interference with commerce by robbery and extortion; and one count of using, carrying, and brandishing a firearm during and in relation to a crime of violence, in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1951(a), and 924(c)(1)(A)(ii).

On Aug. 12, 2009, Soeung Mouv pleaded guilty to conspiracy to interfere with commerce by

robbery and extortion; interference with commerce by robbery and extortion; possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine; possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime; and felon in possession of a firearm in violation of 18 U.S.C. §§ 1951(a), 924(c)(1)(A)(i), 922(g)(1), and 21 U.S.C. § 841(a)(1), stemming from his involvement in the karaoke club robbery and a subsequent arrest for possession of narcotics for sale and a firearm. On October 28, 2009, Judge Wilken sentenced Mouv to a fifteen-year prison term.

On June 30, 2010, around 10:40 p.m., Choung Nguyen was driving in Albany. Police attempted to stop Nguyen because he was suspected in a hit-and-run crash. Nguyen, however, refused to stop and led police on a chase that ended in Berkeley. Nguyen ran from the vehicle and opened fire on the officers with a semiautomatic pistol. Three officers returned fire, shot and killed Nguyen.

Saephan, Dang, and Phun, have also pleaded guilty in this case. Saephan is scheduled to be sentenced on Aug. 25, 2010, while Dang and Phun are scheduled to be sentenced on Sept. 29, 2010.

Saeturn, who has been in custody since his February 2008 arrest, will begin serving his 272-month sentence immediately. Saeturn was also sentenced to a five-year term of supervised release during which he may be searched by any federal, state, or local law enforcement officer with or without cause, and ordered to pay a \$500 special assessment.

Assistant United States Attorney Garth Hire, of the United States Attorney's Office's Organized Crime Strike Force, is prosecuting the case with the assistance of Legal Technician Kathleen Turner. The conviction and sentence were the result of an investigation by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the California Highway Patrol, the Hayward Police Department, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Oakland Police Department, the El Cerrito Police Department, and the San Rafael Police Department.