

MARYLAND DUO RECEIVES 40-YEAR PRISON SENTENCES FOR ARMED ROBBERY CONVICTIONS

Two Maryland men received 40-year prison sentences today for committing two armed robberies in a matter of minutes.

Hardy Lassiter, 32, and Yahya Muqit, 24, were convicted of two counts of armed robbery, 2 counts of possession of a firearm during the commission of a violent crime and 2 counts of pointing a firearm at the conclusion of a two-day jury trial.

The first of the two hold-ups occurred Oct. 6, 2005 at Dale's Quick Stop, 708 Old West Main St. The men brandished handguns during the 10:07 a.m. armed robbery that netted about \$1,300. The armed bandits forced four bystanders to the floor of the business before fleeing in a burgundy Oldsmobile driven by Tunisha Renee Jeter, 22, of Spartanburg. The bandits carried the money in a paper bag.

The getaway vehicle stalled on Westmoreland Drive. The fleeing robbers abandoned the car and used their guns to take a utility van from a worker at a nearby house. The fleeing robbers abandoned the van at the intersection of Wofford and Baltimore streets. Spartanburg Public Safety officers utilized a police dog to capture the group in a matter of minutes.

Principal Deputy Solicitor Barry Barnette utilized eyewitness accounts and the store's surveillance video to connect the suspects to the crime. Police caught the suspects wearing the same outfits that were recorded on the video. They were also caught near the bag of stolen money, four pistols that were brandished during the robbery and a fifth gun that was stolen from Dale's Quick Stop.

Jeter's accessory charge is still pending.

"This is one of the most dangerous armed robberies I have seen," Barnette said. "The defendants entered a crowded store with their guns drawn. Somebody could have easily been hurt or killed."

Lassiter and Muqit will serve 35 years in prison before they are eligible for release.