

SPARTANBURG MAN RECEIVES 16-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR HIGH-SPEED CHASE

A Spartanburg man received a 16-year prison sentence today for shooting at a Highway Patrol Trooper during a high-speed chase.

Christopher Tessinger, 27, pleaded guilty to assault with intent to kill, manufacturing methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine, possession of lortab, failure to stop for a blue light. He also pleaded guilty to two unrelated criminal domestic violence charges.

The pursuit began about 2:20 p.m. on Oct. 13, 2008 when Trooper Jeff Cassidy attempted to stop Tessinger's 1988 Chrysler for a seatbelt violation near the intersection of Fourth Street and Highway 9. Tessinger accelerated immediately and he fired the handgun multiple times out the driver's window toward the pursuing trooper. Cassidy chased on parts of Valley Falls Road, Upper Valley Falls Road and Fairforest Roads before Cassidy discontinued the chase over public safety concerns. A short time later, Tessinger abandoned the vehicle in a wooded area near the intersection of Cedar Crest Road and Granite Park Lane. Sheriff's deputies utilized a police tracking dog and a helicopter to track and arrest Tessinger and a passenger in his car. Tessinger attempted to swallow quantities of methamphetamine and lortab when he was arrested.

Trooper Cassidy testified during the plea. Prosecutors also showed Trooper Cassidy's in-car video to Circuit Judge Mark Hayes.

"The old saying that a picture is worth a thousand words couldn't be any truer," Assistant Solicitor Ann Marie Thompson said. "The video really put this case into perspective. I appreciate the message Judge Hayes is sending with this stiff sentence."

Tessinger's prior criminal record includes convictions for third-degree burglary, breach of trust and numerous fraudulent checks. He is currently serving a 51-month federal prison sentence for being a felon in possession of a firearm. The federal sentence resulted from the police pursuit. Tessinger will be returned to state custody when he completes the federal prison sentence.

For more information, contact Murray Glenn at 809-4892.