

McCook man sentenced to 13 years for Palisade bank robbery

Written by Wauneta Breeze

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A rural McCook man, Joel L. Witt, has been sentenced to 13 years in federal prison for robbing Palisade's Pioneer Community Federal Credit Union at gunpoint on April 18, 2011.

Witt has lived in the Palisade area during various times in his life as well as living in Wauneta for a short time.

In a Lincoln Journal Star article, Assistant U.S. Attorney William Mickle said Witt went into the Pioneer Community Federal Credit Union in Palisade at about 9:45 a.m. on April 18, wearing a dark hooded sweatshirt, mask and gloves and carrying an AR-15 semi-automatic assault rifle. He told the teller, "I need money. Give me your money."

Witt then cocked the rifle. The two tellers emptied their cash drawers into a bag. Witt then went behind the counter into the vault before he left with \$11,576 cash. No one was injured during the robbery.

An hour later near Grant, a Nebraska State Patrol trooper stopped Witt who was driving a dark green station wagon that matched the description of the robber's car and found the mask, sweatshirt, money and the loaded AR-15 in his car.

Senior U.S. District Judge Warren Urbom sentenced Witt to 13 years in federal prison last week in Lincoln.

Witt's attorney argued for a lesser sentence, saying Witt never had been convicted of anything beyond a traffic ticket prior to this robbery.

Hitchcock County Sheriff D. Bryan Leggott stated that he felt justice had been served. Pioneer CFU representatives were unable to comment on the incident or sentencing.

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Staff and Associated Press reports were used to compile this story.