

# **Former Reservist Pleads Guilty to Stealing Weapons from Army Reserve Center, Escaping from Prison & Attempted Bank Robbery**

A former Army Reservist has pleaded guilty to stealing six machine guns and 10 handguns from a U.S. Army Reserve facility, escaping from federal prison, and attempting to rob two banks.

James W. Morales, 35, of Cambridge, pleaded guilty to one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm; one count of possession of a machine gun; one count of possession of stolen firearms; one count of theft of government property; one count of conspiracy to possess, store, conceal, and sell stolen weapons; one count of escape; and two counts of attempted bank robbery. U.S. District Court Judge Timothy S. Hillman scheduled sentencing for Feb. 8, 2018.

On Nov. 14, 2015, Morales broke into a weapons vault at the Lincoln Stoddard United States Army Reserve Center in Worcester and stole six M-4 Carbines and 10 M-11 handguns. Morales was familiar with the layout of the facility, having been stationed there prior to his discharge from the Army Reserve.

Morales gained access to the weapons by breaking a kitchen window located near the room that contained the vault, climbing to the top of the vault, and cutting a hole through its ceiling. The sharp edges of the ceiling caused Morales to cut himself, leaving behind DNA, which was matched to Morales three days after the robbery.

Upon identifying Morales through the DNA database, law enforcement learned that Morales was on bail for child rape charges pending in Middlesex Superior Court. One of the conditions of his release required him to wear an electronic monitoring bracelet, which he wore during the robbery. In addition, surveillance video depicting a dark colored BMW X1 parked at a building adjacent to the U.S. Army facility was recovered. In the video, a man can be seen going to and from the car with duffle bags. Soon after Morales was identified, law enforcement learned that Morales was renting a BMW X1 at the time of the robbery.

After the robbery, Morales rented another vehicle, and GPS data from the vehicle showed that Morales had travelled to New York City. Morales was then located and arrested on Nov. 18, 2015, in Long Island. Inside his vehicle, four M-4 Carbines and two M-11 handguns were recovered with serial numbers matching those stolen from the Armory.

Morales gave a statement to agents admitting his role in the robbery of the Army Reserve facility. Morales went on to explain that he had sold five of the handguns to two individuals in Dorchester with the help of Tyrone James, who facilitated the transaction. Morales claimed to have given James several hundred dollars, one of the M-4 Carbines and one of the M-11 handguns as payment for assisting with the sales. In April 2017, James was sentenced to 57 months in federal prison.

Following his arrest, Morales was detained at the Donald W. Wyatt Detention Facility in Central Falls, R.I. On Dec. 31, 2016, Morales escaped from the prison by climbing a basketball hoop, jumping onto a roof, and going through a barbed wire fence.

On Jan. 5, 2017, Morales, captured on surveillance video, entered a branch of Bank of America in Cambridge and attempted to rob the bank by passing the teller a note that read, "I

WANT ALL OF THE LARGE DENOMINATIONS W/BAND'S FROM THE 2ND (BOTTOM) TILL NOW BE CALM – BE COOL – NO DYE PACKS.” The teller was able to flee to the back of the bank behind a locked door, and Morales exited the bank without any money.

Later that same day, Morales, again captured on surveillance video, entered a branch of Citizen's Bank in Somerville and attempted to rob the bank by passing the teller a note that read, “I WANT THE MONEY IN THE TILL NOW!! 100's 50's 20's Be Calm, Be Cool, be Quick.” The teller stated, “I can't,” and Morales wished the teller a nice day and exited the bank.

After a foot pursuit in Somerville, Morales was apprehended by law enforcement; he admitted to attempting to rob both banks.

All of the M-4 Carbines have been recovered, while five of the handguns have not yet been recovered. The FBI is offering a reward in connection with information that leads to their recovery. Anyone with information should contact the FBI immediately at (857) 386-2000.

Each possession charge provides for a sentence of no greater than 10 years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000. The charges of conspiracy and escape provide for a sentence of no greater than five years in prison, three years of supervised release, and a fine of \$250,000. The charge of bank robbery provides for a sentence of no greater than 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release, a fine of \$250,000 and restitution. Sentences are imposed by a federal district court judge bases upon the U.S. Sentencing guidelines and other statutory factors.