

Charges: Robbers got just \$215 from an Uptown bank

Both suspects are fugitives of halfway houses and were previously convicted of bank robbery

By Paul Walsh

Authorities say two men charged Wednesday with robbing an Uptown Minneapolis bank, fleeing in one stolen car and carjacking another had little cash to show for their high-speed mayhem — just \$215.

Orlando R. Vasquez, 40, and Gregory S. Tyler, 49, both convicted in previous separate bank robberies and fugitives from halfway houses 1,600 miles apart, were charged in federal court in Minneapolis with bank robbery, and they remained jailed in Hennepin County.

In separate interviews with investigators, the men admitted robbing the TCF Bank branch in Uptown, and each implicated the other, according to an FBI affidavit filed with the charges.

The affidavit continued:

Tyler, having cut off his electronic monitoring device, used a car he had stolen Saturday from a fellow resident at his Minneapolis halfway house and waited outside the bank Monday as Vasquez held it up.

Vasquez handed the teller a note demanding cash and said he would “smoke” him if he didn’t comply. Vasquez also aimed a pepper spray can at the teller. Vasquez was given \$215, and he hopped in the back seat of the car.

As Tyler and Vasquez fled, they collided with a BMW in a neighborhood about 12 blocks from the bank and then hit two parked vehicles, the FBI said.

Two people in the BMW were slightly hurt, and Vasquez ended up with “large cuts and scrapes” on his face and leg.

The suspects fled on foot and then commandeered a 36-year-old woman’s car about a block away, the FBI added.

The men were arrested Tuesday afternoon at a motel on West 7th Street in St. Paul. The U.S. Marshals Service said Vasquez and Tyler were tracked there because Tyler had paid for the room with a credit card stolen from the owner of the first getaway car.

The carjack victim, Lisa Whalley, declined Wednesday to say anything about her experience except that her car was found abandoned in a St. Paul parking lot on Tuesday. She said she won’t get it back until the FBI finishes processing the vehicle as part of its investigation.

Police and the FBI say the robbers ordered Whalley out of her car just as she had started it, and she struggled with them. They demanded her keys and threatened to shoot her. She saw no gun and was not harmed, she said.

Vasquez had been in a Nevada halfway house after serving prison time for making off with about \$2,000 in a bank robbery in Las Vegas in 2003.

Tyler’s previous bank robbery occurred in May 2007 at the TCF branch on Old Hudson Road in St. Paul. He also came away with about \$2,000.

