

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, December 7, 2011

Arkansas Man Pleads Guilty to Civil Rights Offenses for Involvement in the Firebombing of Interracial Couple's Home

WASHINGTON - Gary Dodson, 32, of Waldron, Ark., pleaded guilty today in U.S. District Court in Little Rock, Ark., to one count of civil rights conspiracy, one count of interference with housing rights due to race and one count of possession of an unregistered firearm/destructive device for his involvement in the Jan. 14, 2011, racially motivated firebombing of the home of an interracial couple in Hardy, Ark.

Dodson, along with Jason Barnwell, 37, of Evening Shade, Ark.; Jake Murphy, 19, of Waldron; Dustin Hammond, 20, of Hardy, Ark.; and Wendy Treybig, 31, of Evening Shade, were indicted in April by a federal grand jury on civil rights charges and other federal charges stemming from their participation in the racially motivated firebombing and their attempts to obstruct a federal investigation.

During the plea proceedings, Dodson admitted that on the night of Jan. 14, 2011, while at a party at Barnwell's house in Evening Shade, he, Murphy, Hammond and Barnwell devised a plan to firebomb the victims' house. Dodson then drove all four men from Barnwell's residence to the victims' house in Hardy. When they arrived, Barnwell, Murphy and Hammond constructed three Molotov cocktails and threw them at the house. They damaged the victims' house, however, the victims were not injured.

"The victims' home was attacked and their safety threatened because of their race. Such violence and intimidation has no place in our society," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division. "The Justice Department will continue to vigorously prosecute individuals who commit such atrocious acts of hate."

"Today's plea begins the final chapter in a terrible story begun less than a year ago on the night of Jan. 14, 2011, in a small Northeast Arkansas community," said Christopher R. Thyer, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas. "Racially motivated violence, more than any other type, tears at the very fabric of what makes America and Arkansas great. We should be celebrating our diversity rather than committing acts of violence because of it. When it occurs, my office will vigorously prosecute it."

Dodson faces a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison. Sentencing has been set for April 6, 2012. Barnwell, Murphy, Hammond and Treybig have already pleaded guilty for their involvement in this matter.

This case was investigated by the Little Rock Office of the FBI and the Little Rock Office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, with assistance from the Arkansas State Police, the Hardy and Waldron Police Departments, and the Scott and Sharp County Sheriff's Offices. It is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney John Ray White of the Eastern District of Arkansas, and Trial Attorneys Cindy Chung and Henry Leventis of the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division.