



Department of Justice

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MAN INDICTED FOR CIVIL RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH CROSS-BURNING IN ATHENS, LOUISIANA

WASHINGTON – Acting Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Division Loretta King and U.S. Attorney Donald W. Washington for the Western District of Louisiana announced that Daniel Earl Danforth, 30, of Minden, La., has been indicted by a federal grand jury for hate crime violations and obstruction of justice charges stemming from a cross-burning in Athens, La., last year near the home of an interracial couple. Danforth was arrested today following the return of the indictment on Sept. 25, 2009.

Danforth was charged with one count of interfering with the housing rights of another person; one count of conspiring to interfere with another person's civil rights; one count of using fire during the commission of a felony; and one count of obstructing justice by destroying evidence. If convicted, he faces a maximum punishment of 10 years for each of the civil rights counts, 10 additional years for the use of fire and 20 years for the obstruction of justice count.

According to the indictment, between Oct. 23 and Oct. 26, 2008, Danforth agreed with at least one other person to build, erect and burn a cross near the home of an interracial couple and relatives who were believed to approve of the interracial relationship. After attempting to recruit others to join the conspiracy, Danforth and his co-conspirator used small pine trees to form a cross, which they then transported to an area adjacent to the victims' home and where they set the cross on fire in order to intimidate the couple. The indictment also alleges that several days later, after the defendant learned that the FBI was investigating this crime as a potential civil rights violation, he returned to the area and removed the cross to prevent the FBI from discovering it.

This case was investigated by the FBI. The case will be prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Mary J. Mudrick for the Western District of Louisiana and Trial Attorney Erin Aslan from the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division.

The charges set forth in an indictment are merely accusations and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

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