



Department of Justice

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FOUR PERSONS CHARGED WITH ENVIRONMENTAL CRIMES

Defendants Released Ozone-Depleting Substance into Atmosphere When Stealing Air Conditioners

GAINESVILLE, GA - DANIEL ARNOT, 25, of Eastanollee, Georgia; SABRINA WESTBROOKS ARNOT, 21, of Lavonia, Georgia; COREY BEARD, 22, of Eastanollee, Georgia; and JUSTIN JOYNER, 24, of Toccoa, Georgia, have been indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of conspiracy to release ozone-depleting substances into the environment. The defendants were also indicted on 12 counts of releasing ozone-depleting substances into the environment.

“When these four defendants allegedly ripped apart industrial-sized air conditioners to steal their copper parts to sell as scrap metal, they released dangerous ozone-destroying substances into the atmosphere,” said United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates. “Their greed not only hurt the businesses and other establishments that lost their air conditioners in the sweltering Georgia summer, but also harmed the environment – a harm that impacts all of us. The defendants are now being held accountable for their actions.”

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: Beginning in early August 2008, ARNOT, WESTBROOKS ARNOT, BEARD and JOYNER targeted businesses with commercial-sized air conditioners in Stephens, Hall, Franklin, and Hart Counties. ARNOT, working with his wife SABRINA, or with his other accomplices, BEARD and JOYNER, dismantled the air conditioning units so that they could steal the copper and aluminum parts. To steal the copper parts, they would have to cut a copper coil. Cutting this coil released “hydrochlorofluorocarbon 22” into the atmosphere. Hydrochlorofluorocarbon 22, also known by the brand name “Freon,” is the cooling substance that helps regulate a room’s temperature. Established research shows that hydrochlorofluorocarbon 22 depletes the ozone layer, which protects people from harmful ultraviolet radiation. After dismantling the air conditioners, the defendants allegedly sold the copper and aluminum parts to scrap metal recycling businesses. ARNOT and WESTBROOKS ARNOT were arrested by local authorities on September 4, 2008, after allegedly stealing three air conditioning units from the

Cornerstone Baptist Church in Hartwell, Georgia. The indictment alleges that the defendants' crimes involved the dismantling of approximately 35 air conditioning units from 14 locations, including businesses, an Elks Lodge, a golf course, and the church.

The indictment charges one conspiracy count and 12 counts of releasing hydrochlorofluorocarbon 22 into the environment. Each charge carries a maximum possible sentence of up to 5 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

Members of the public are reminded that the indictment contains only allegations. A defendant is presumed innocent of the charges and it will be the government's burden to prove a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt at trial.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Environmental Protection Agency, Criminal Investigation Division.

Assistant United States Attorney Paul Jones is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact Sally Quillian Yates, United States Attorney, or Charysse L. Alexander, Executive Assistant United States Attorney, through Patrick Crosby, Public Affairs Officer, U.S. Attorney's Office, at (404) 581-6016. The Internet address for the HomePage for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Georgia is www.justice.gov/usao/gan.