



## U.S. Department of Justice

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### **OREGON RESIDENT FOUND GUILTY OF FEDERAL ARSON CHARGES**

ROCKFORD -- PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; ANDREW L. TRAVER, Special Agent-In-Charge of the Chicago Office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, & Explosives; DAVID B. FOREMAN, Illinois State Fire Marshal; JOHN B. ROE, Ogle County States Attorney; and DARIN DEHAAN, Chief of the Oregon Police Department, today made the following announcement:

After a four day trial, a federal jury yesterday returned guilty verdicts against **SAMER J. ALJABARI**, age 23, of Oregon, Illinois, convicting him of one count of destroying, by means of fire, a building used in interstate commerce (arson), and one count of conspiracy to commit arson in relation to a fire at the Oregon Smoke Shop, located at 210 S. 4th Street, Oregon, Illinois, on October 4, 2007. The indictment alleged that Aljabari worked at Sam's Wholesale Tobacco and Gifts in Oregon, Illinois as a clerk and also resided at that address in a room in the back of the business and that Sam's Wholesale Tobacco was owned by a relative of Aljabari. The indictment further alleged that as part of the conspiracy that Aljabari recruited various individuals to burn down the Oregon Smoke Shop because it was a competitor of Sam's Wholesale Tobacco and was hurting its business. Three other men charged in the case have also pled guilty. On June 19, 2008, **CHRISTOPHER R. TAYLOR**, age 20, of Mt. Morris, Illinois, and on July 1, 2008, **MATTHEW R. McMEEKAN**, age 20, of Oregon, Illinois, each pleaded guilty to conspiring to commit arson. On June 19, 2008, **HAROLD LAMAR RAINS**, age 19, of Oregon, Illinois, pleaded guilty to perjury relating to his false testimony before the Federal Grand Jury during the investigation of the fire.

Aljabari, McMeekan, and Taylor were first charged by the Ogle County States Attorney's Office under state law. They were later transferred to federal court where they, along with Rains, were charged with federal crimes in relation to the fire at the Oregon Smoke Shop on October 4, 2007.

Sentencing for Aljabari is scheduled for May 28, 2008 at 2:30 p.m. Sentencing hearings for McMeekan, Taylor and Rains have not yet been scheduled. Aljabari, McMeekan and Taylor face a minimum sentence of 5 years and a maximum potential sentence of 20 years in prison. Rains faces a possible maximum penalty of 5 years in prison. Each defendant also faces a fine of up to \$250,000, up to 3 years of supervised release following imprisonment, and full restitution. The actual sentence for each defendant will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The case was investigated by the Rockford office of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, the Illinois State Fire Marshal and the Oregon Police Department, with the assistance of the Oregon Fire Department. The case is being prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorneys Joseph C. Pedersen and John G. McKenzie.

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