



## U.S. Department of Justice

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### **OGLE COUNTY RESIDENT SENTENCED TO MORE THAN 9 YEARS IN PRISON FOR CHARGES RELATING TO AN ARSON AT THE OREGON SMOKE SHOP**

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 DEFRATIES, Acting 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:

Today, **SAMER J. ALJABARI**, age 23, of Oregon, Illinois, was sentenced in Rockford federal court by United States District Judge Frederick J. Kapala to 110 months in prison, without parole, for his role in relation to a fire at the Oregon Smoke Shop, 210 S. 4th Street, Oregon, Illinois, on October 4, 2007. Judge Kapala also ordered Aljabari to serve 3 years of supervised release after his prison term and to pay approximately \$56,000 in restitution to the victims of the arson.

After a four day trial ending on February 27, 2009, a federal jury returned guilty verdicts against Aljabari, 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 and been sentenced. 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. On March 23, 2009, Judge Kapala imposed federal prison sentences of 4 years for Taylor, 3 years for McMeekan, and 21 months for Rains. Judge Kapala also ordered all three men to serve 3 years of supervised release after their prison terms and to pay approximately \$56,000 in restitution to the victims of the arson.

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.

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 was prosecuted in federal court by Assistant United States Attorneys Joseph C. Pedersen and John G. Mckenzie.

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