



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2004
WWW.USDOJ.GOV

CRT
(202) 514-2008
TDD (202) 514-1888

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES ARRESTS AND INDICTMENT IN NORTH CAROLINA CROSS BURNING CASE

WASHINGTON, D.C.- The Justice Department today announced that four North Carolina men were arrested yesterday in connection with a conspiracy to violate the civil rights of an African-American family in Richlands, North Carolina.

According to the indictment, filed in the Eastern District of North Carolina, the defendants perpetrated a series of racially motivated acts included hanging a noose on the family's door, burning a cross on their lawn, and throwing a dead raccoon into their yard. These incidents all occurred in 1999, shortly after the victim family moved into a previously all-white area of Richlands.

"No American should ever be victimized by the kind of vicious racial intimidation that is alleged to have occurred in this case," said Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights R. Alexander Acosta. "This kind of behavior is unconscionable and the Justice Department will vigorously prosecute all those who would attempt to intimidate their fellow citizens through such abhorrent behavior."

Accused in the conspiracy count are: Joshua Hancock, 22, currently of Leland; Ricky Chase Hobbs, 22, of Richlands; and Jeremy Kratzer, 24, of Maple Hill. A fourth defendant, 19-year-old Roston Chance Hobbs of Richlands, is charged with making false statements to the FBI and obstructing justice by tampering with a federal witness during the investigation of this case.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation and the Onslow County Sheriff's Office. The case is being prosecuted by attorneys from the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of North Carolina.

The indictment is merely an accusation and the defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

###

04-115