



*United States Attorney
Southern District of New York*

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CONTACT: U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
HERBERT HADAD
ELLEN DAVIS
CARLY SULLIVAN
JERIKA RICHARDSON
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE
(914) 993-1900, (212) 637-2600

**NEW JERSEY MAN SENTENCED IN WHITE PLAINS FEDERAL COURT
TO 19 YEARS IN PRISON FOR ARMED BANK ROBBERY,
ARSON, AND OBSTRUCTION OF JUSTICE**

PREET BHARARA, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that SONNY DESPOSITO, 25, of River Vale, New Jersey, was sentenced today in White Plains federal court to 19 years in prison for armed bank robbery, arson, and obstruction of justice. The sentence was imposed this afternoon by United States District Judge CATHY SEIBEL. DESPOSITO was convicted on December 8, 2010, after a seven-day trial before Judge SEIBEL.

According to the evidence introduced at trial and other documents and proceedings in this case:

On January 23, 2009, DESPOSITO entered the M&T Bank at 770 Chestnut Ridge Road in Chestnut Ridge, Rockland County, New York, wearing a mask and sunglasses. Upon entering the bank, he put a pellet gun into the chest of a customer who was leaving, and directed the customer to stay inside of the bank. DESPOSITO then approached the teller counter, pointed the gun at a bank teller, and told her that he would shoot everyone in the bank if she did not give him money. He also told the teller that he would hunt her down and kill her if she included any dye packs or bait bills with the money. DESPOSITO left the bank with approximately \$10,600 in cash, and fled on foot to a car parked on a nearby street.

Prior to the bank robbery, DESPOSITO set fire to a Jeep parked in a driveway of a home near the M&T Bank, in order to divert and distract law enforcement during the robbery. After the robbery, he drove to a residential street in Pearl River, New York, where he put a number of items he used during the commission of the crime in a pile at the end of the street and lit them on fire. When the fire was finally extinguished, law enforcement officers recovered evidence from the bank robbery,

including, a black knit ski mask, a pair of sunglasses, a pellet gun, license plates, a pillowcase, a pair of sneakers, several items of clothing, and a can of lighter fluid. DESPOSITO's DNA was recovered from the ski mask.

After his arrest, DESPOSITO attempted to fabricate evidence related to the can of lighter fluid recovered from the second fire.

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In addition to his prison term, JUDGE SEIBEL sentenced DESPOSITO to five years of supervised release on the armed robbery and obstruction of justice counts (Counts One and Three), and three years of supervised release on the arson count (Count Two), with the terms to run concurrently. He was also ordered to pay restitution to M&T Bank in the amount of \$10,663.

In imposing the sentence, Judge SEIBEL noted that the bank robbery and arson offenses committed by the defendant were "dangerous and terrifying," and that "protecting the public from further crimes [of the defendant] is, in this case, an important factor." Judge SEIBEL also found that the defendant had committed perjury during trial.

Mr. BHARARA praised the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Town of Ramapo Police Department, and the Rockland County Sheriff's Office in this investigation.

This case is being handled by the Office's White Plains Division. Assistant United States Attorneys SARAH R. KRISOFF and MARGERY B. FEINZIG are in charge of the prosecution.

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