



# Department of Justice

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## **ATLANTA SERIAL ARSONIST CONVICTED IN FEDERAL COURT**

### **CHRISTOPHER MOCK JURY VERDICT RETURNED**

Atlanta, GA - A jury in federal district court has returned a guilty verdict against former Chatham County Police Officer CHRISTOPHER MOCK, 45, of Atlanta, Georgia on multiple charges of arson.

"This defendant's string of apartment building arsons posed a grave threat to the safety of our community," said David E. Nahmias, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Georgia. "Through the excellent, cooperative work of local, state, and federal law enforcement and fire rescue agencies, assisted by many good citizens including the defendant's taxi company, he was identified, arrested, and has now been convicted. We are thankful that no one was seriously hurt, and that Mr. Mock will remain in prison now for many years."

"Mr. Mock was a serial arsonist who targeted occupied structures. Our investigators were in a race against time to track him down and put an end to his crime spree before someone was hurt or killed," said ATF Special Agent In Charge Vanessa McLemore. "I am grateful for the work of our agents, the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department, the DeKalb Fire Rescue Department, and our partners in the Metro Atlanta Arson Task Force. Today's verdict illustrates their ability to build a solid case and make Atlanta safer."

"This potentially deadly arson case provides an excellent example of what can be accomplished when several agencies across various jurisdictions work together for a common good," said Fire Chief Dennis L. Rubin, of the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department. "This guilty verdict represents thousands of hours of collaborative and dedicated work by our federal, state, and local agencies."

According to the evidence presented during the trial, from September 2004 through October 2004, Christopher Mock, who was then a cab driver, set a series of fires, primarily in the stairwells of 2-to-3 story brick apartment buildings, some of which forced residents to jump to safety. These fires caused great concern for the residents of the

communities of Midtown, Buckhead, Virginia Highlands and Dekalb County. The evidence at trial showed that Mock set fire to one apartment because of his animosity toward Georgia Tech students and that he appeared to have set fire to another apartment because he believed it was located in a Jewish neighborhood.

MOCK came to the attention of investigators when they noticed him walking near the scene of a fire he had set two days earlier. MOCK was then carrying a clear water bottle containing an amber colored fluid that investigators believed to be gasoline. MOCK was seen tossing the water bottle into the trunk of a cab that he was driving. The cab company MOCK worked for provided fare and GPS information that tied MOCK to the scene of several fires. Further investigation of MOCK by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department, the DeKalb Fire and Rescue Department, the Metro Arson Task Force and the State Insurance Commissioner's Office resulted in MOCK's arrest, and the seizure of water and soda bottles containing gasoline in addition to a note describing what investigators believe was his next target. During the trial, Atlanta Fire Rescue Department Chief Brenda Willis testified that the pattern of stairwell fires in brick apartment building ceased after MOCK's arrest.

The jury found MOCK guilty on fourteen out of fifteen arson counts in the indictment. MOCK was arrested on October 28, 2004, on complaint charging him with arson. MOCK was indicted by a federal grand jury on November 22, 2004.

MOCK could receive a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000 on each count of conviction. Sentencing is scheduled for September 20, 2006 at 4 p.m. before United States District Judge Clarence Cooper.

This case was investigated by Special Agents John Paul and Dan Arrugueta of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Captain Bryant Tate, Lieutenant J. D. Phillips and Lieutenant J.B. Buck of the Atlanta Fire Rescue Department; and Chief Joe McKinnon and Captain Brad Gray of the DeKalb County Fire Rescue Department; and members of the Metro Arson Task Force.

Assistant United States Attorneys Joseph Plummer and Francey Hakes are prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias (pronounced NAH-me-us), 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.usdoj.gov/usao/gan](http://www.usdoj.gov/usao/gan).