



**U.S. Department of Justice**

*United States Attorney  
District of Maryland  
Northern Division*

*Allen F. Loucks  
United States Attorney*

*Vickie E. LeDuc  
Public Information Officer*

*36 South Charles Street  
Fourth Floor  
Baltimore, Maryland 21201*

*410-209-4800  
TTY/TDD:410-962-4462  
410-209-4885  
FAX 410-962-3091  
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov*

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**FOR FURTHER  
INFORMATION CONTACT  
VICKIE E. LEDUC, AUSA  
(410) 209-4885**

**AARON SPEED PLEADS GUILTY IN CHARLES COUNTY SUBDIVISION ARSON**

**Greenbelt, Maryland** - United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Allen F. Loucks announces that today Aaron Lee Speed, age 21, of Waldorf, Maryland pled guilty to conspiracy to commit arson in connection with the December 6, 2004 fire at the Hunters Brooke development located in Charles County, Maryland.

According to the statement of facts agreed to by the parties, beginning in October of 2004 Speed conspired with others to commit arson at 35 houses under construction in the Hunter's Brooke development in Indian Head, Charles County, Maryland. To carry out the scheme, the conspirators obtained flammable materials and poured the materials into containers. Some of the materials were placed on the premises during the time Speed worked at Hunter's Brooke as the security guard on the night of December 3, 2005. Other items were placed onsite on the night of the fire. To conceal the flammable materials, the conspirators used common containers such as drywall buckets, detergent bottles and other large plastic containers. On December 6, 2004, the conspirators poured other accelerants in the entranceways and other areas of the houses located on those lots. Using flares, matches and propane torches, the conspirators then lit the flammable materials, causing a

series of fires which resulted in the destruction of or damage to several houses in various stages of construction. None of the houses were occupied at the time of the fires.

Speed's role during the arson was, among other things, to assist in stealing the ignitable liquids used to start the fire, provide transportation for those ignitable liquids to Hunter's Brooke, advise other co-conspirators on how and when to gain access to the site and to contact the security guard on duty and encourage him to leave to allow unfettered access to Hunter's Brooke. In addition, based on his knowledge gained as a security guard at Hunter's Brooke, Speed provided a hand-drawn map of the subdivision and identified which house was occupied so that it would not be targeted during the arson. Speed supplied one of the propane torches used to start the fires, radios for communication and latex gloves to avoid leaving fingerprints. He personally participated in lighting the fires. Speed participated in the arson at Hunter's Brooke because he was angry at his employer for denying him bereavement leave after the death of his child. He also resented the wealth of the residents.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, Speed agreed to the payment of restitution in the amount of \$4,178,698.33. He faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison followed by three years of supervised release. Sentencing has been scheduled for October 18, 2005 at 10:00 am.

The case is a result of an investigation coordinated by a task force which includes the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Office of the Maryland State Fire Marshal and the Charles County Sheriff's Office. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Donna C. Sanger and Timothy B. Atkins.