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**“SERIAL ARSONIST” THOMAS SWEATT SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON
FOR SETTING 45 RESIDENTIAL FIRES IN MARYLAND,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA AND VIRGINIA**

Fires Resulted in Two Deaths

GREENBELT, Maryland - United States Attorneys for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein, for the District of Columbia Kenneth L. Wainstein, and for the Eastern District of Virginia Paul J. McNulty, and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Special Agent in Charge Theresa R. Stoop announce that today U.S. District Court Judge Deborah K. Chasanow sentenced Thomas Sweatt, age 51, of Washington, D.C., to life in prison in connection with his guilty plea to possession of destructive devices; destruction of buildings by fire resulting in personal injury; possession of destructive devices in furtherance of a crime of violence; first degree premeditated murder (felony murder) and second degree murder.

Maryland United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein stated, “I am profoundly grateful to the skilled investigators, prosecutors and scientists who worked tirelessly to catch Mr. Sweatt and bring his senseless crime wave to an end. More fires would have been set, more homes would have been destroyed, and more people would have been killed if not for the extraordinary work of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies and the assistance of private citizens and businesses.”

United States Attorney Kenneth Wainstein stated “Over the course of two years, Mr. Sweatt methodically terrorized people in every corner of the Washington Metropolitan Region. At the same time, the dedicated public servants on the Serial Arson Task Force just as methodically tracked him down and built a solid case that led to his conviction and life sentence. It is our hope that today’s sentence will provide a measure of comfort and justice for our many neighbors who suffered at the hands of Mr. Sweatt.”

ATF Special Agent in Charge Theresa Stoop stated “For over two years each member of the

task force worked feverishly for this day. Although we cannot resurrect the precious lives of Lou Edna Jones or Annie Brown, repair the destroyed property, or erase the horrible memories caused by Mr. Sweatt's crimes, we hope this life sentence will foster healing for all in our communities."

According to the agreed statement of facts presented to the court as part of his plea agreement, Sweatt deliberately set a series of fires in Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia in 2003 and 2004, understanding that his actions would result in damage and injury to persons and property. Sweatt set 45 residential fires using incendiary devices, the components of which were a one-gallon plastic jug, a plastic bag, and a cloth material used as a wick. Gasoline was used as an accelerant in the devices.

According to the statement of facts, investigators from the Serial Arson Task Force were able to identify Sweatt as the perpetrator of the arsons by, among other things, matching DNA samples recovered at various fire scenes. Upon his arrest on April 27, 2005, Sweatt admitted in a videotaped confession to Task Force Agents that he typically placed the device near a door because it was more likely to burn at that location and that he was, at times, aware that persons were in the homes at which he set these devices on fire.

For example, an investigation of a fire on February 5, 2002 at 1210 Montello Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. revealed that smoke from the fire seeped through the walls to the adjoining house where 89-year-old Annie Brown resided. Ms. Brown suffered from smoke inhalation and was taken to the hospital where she died on February 14, 2002.

Also, on June 5, 2003 firefighters were called to 2800 Evarts Street, N.E, Washington, D.C. where they found the house totally engulfed in flames. Two occupants had escaped by jumping from a second-story window. Firefighters rescued 86-year-old Lou Edna Jones from her second-floor bedroom where she had been trapped. She was taken to Washington Hospital Center where she was pronounced dead. A subsequent investigation revealed that the fire was intentionally set by a device containing an ignitable liquid which was placed outside near the front door. The fire penetrated the interior first floor and made its way up the stairwell to the second floor.

Additionally, a device containing ignitable liquid was placed between the first and second floors of an apartment building's only stairwell at 7700 Blair Road, Silver Spring, Maryland. An investigation of this February 14, 2004 fire revealed that the burning ignitable liquid flowed across the landing and down the steps to the first floor. The fire produced untenable heat, smoke and combustion, forcing the occupants to jump from second and third story windows, resulting in physical injuries.

Sweatt admitted setting each of these and other fires, and pleaded guilty to charges of murder.

United States Attorney Rosenstein commended the outstanding investigative work performed over the past two years by the Serial Arson Task Force, which includes the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; District of Columbia Fire/EMS; Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department; District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department; Prince George's County Police; Maryland State Fire Marshals Office ; Montgomery County Department of Fire and

Rescue Services; Montgomery County Police Department; Fairfax County Fire and Rescue; Maryland State Police; Anne Arundel County Fire; Alexandria Fire Department; Howard County Fire Department; Howard County Police Department; Arlington County Fire Department; and Baltimore City Fire Department. Mr. Rosenstein also thanked the Naval Criminal Investigative Service for their valuable assistance.

Mr. Rosenstein also praised Assistant U.S. Attorneys Mythili Raman and James M. Trusty from the District of Maryland, Jennifer Anderson from the District of Columbia and Morris Parker from the Eastern District of Virginia, who prosecuted the case.