



Department of Justice

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FORMER FLIGHT ATTENDANT FOUND GUILTY IN PASSENGER JET FIRE

Atlanta, GA -TURHAN LAMONS, age 26, of Morrow, Georgia, was found guilty this morning by a federal jury in Rome on charges of arson on an aircraft, interference with a flight crew, and using fire to commit a felony.

“This office takes seriously any threat to the safety of civil aviation, especially in the post-9/11 world,” United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said after the jury verdict. “This defendant has shown himself to be such a threat on more than one occasion. We will continue to pursue cases of this type to ensure the safety of the flying public.”

According to U.S. Attorney Nahmias and the information presented in court: On the evening of May 8, 2003, LAMONS, who was working as the sole flight attendant on Comair flight 5491 from Atlanta to Huntsville, Alabama, set a fire in the lavatory of the aircraft. When LAMONS reported to the Captain that there was smoke of unknown origin in the lavatory, the Canadair Regional jet was forced to make an emergency landing at Rome’s Richard B. Russell Regional Airport about 20 minutes after takeoff. Suspicion focused on LAMONS after the Rome Fire Marshal concluded that the fire was set deliberately and investigation showed that he was the only person who entered the lavatory during the brief flight. LAMONS also had made numerous conflicting statements about the fire and his involvement with it.

In March 2005 LAMONS also was convicted of maliciously conveying false information concerning an attempt to damage a civil aircraft and commit an act of violence against aircraft passengers, a charge stemming from a call he made to AirTran Airways at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. The false information conveyed was that “Everyone on board flight 278 is going to die.” LAMONS awaits sentencing on the March 2005 conviction, and also faces a charge of obstructing justice by presenting forged medical records to the Court in order to delay both that sentencing and the trial that ended with a guilty verdict today..

Sentencing for LAMONS on the convictions today and the conviction of March 2005 will be set after resolution of the obstruction charge, before Senior United States District

Judge Robert L. Vining, Jr., in Rome. Meanwhile, LAMONS remains in the custody of the United States Marshal.

This case was investigated by the Floyd County Police and Special Agents of the FBI

Assistant United States Attorney Jane Wilcox Swift is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact David E. Nahmias, United States Attorney or F. Gentry Shelnett, Chief, Criminal Division, 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.