



# Department of Justice

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## **COVINGTON MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO PLANTING HOAX EXPLOSIVE DEVICE**

Atlanta, GA - BARRON HAYS HARPER, JR., 60, of Covington, Georgia, pleaded guilty today in federal court to charges of placing a hoax explosive device on a natural gas line in Covington, and making false statements about the incident to the FBI.

United States Attorney David E. Nahmias said, "The use of hoax explosive devices diverts valuable law enforcement resources that need to be used in the investigation of the many very real threats to public safety. Our resources should not be wasted by those who want to cause a scare or play a joke. This is a serious offense, and this conviction should serve as a warning to others considering this type of hoax."

According to United States Attorney Nahmias, and the other information presented in court: HARPER, an employee of the Covington Gas Company for almost 20 years, constructed a hoax pipe bomb out of parts he found while on different jobs. He placed the device on a natural gas switching station, where it was eventually found by a co-worker. The discovery of the hoax device caused a scare and federal and local law enforcement agencies responded to the scene in large numbers. The investigation took two weeks. HARPER initially lied to FBI agents, but later admitted that he had planted the device "just to see what would happen."

FBI Special Agent in Charge Greg Jones said, "The time wasted by FBI agents and other officers on this case could have been used for more serious and productive matters. Citizens must recognize the huge response necessary for any found explosive device to protect the community. This type of behavior is irresponsible as well as criminal."

HARPER faces a maximum sentence of five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000. HARPER is scheduled to be sentenced on May 30, 2007, at 11 a.m.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the FBI, assisted by the City of Covington Police Department.

Assistant United States Attorney Katherine Monahan is 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).