



Orange County News

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District Attorney Hoovler Announces Guilty Plea in Arson Case

Restaurant Owner Pleads Guilty to Torching Business for Insurance Money

Orange County District Attorney David M. Hoovler announced today that on March 21, 2017, Khaled Baroud, 61, of New Windsor, pleaded guilty to Attempted Arson in the Third Degree and Insurance Fraud in the Third Degree, for having intentionally set fire to the restaurant that he operated at 440 South Plank Road, in the Town of Newburgh, on March 13, 2016. Baroud admitted that he set fire to “USA Waffles,” the waffle and bagel shop that he had opened on February 28, 2016, in order to collect over \$50,000 in insurance proceeds. Baroud had rented the premises where he set the fire.

Baroud, who initially denied setting the fire, was arrested after a yearlong joint investigation by the Town of Newburgh Police Department, the Town of Newburgh Fire Investigation Unit, the F.B.I, the N.Y.S Criminal Investigation Unit of the N.Y.S Department of Financial Services, the N.Y.S Insurance Fund, and the Orange County District Attorney’s Office.

Baroud is scheduled to be sentenced by Orange County Court Judge Robert H. Freehill on April 19, 2017. At the time Baroud pleaded guilty, the District Attorney’s Office announced that they would be seeking a state prison sentence on the case.

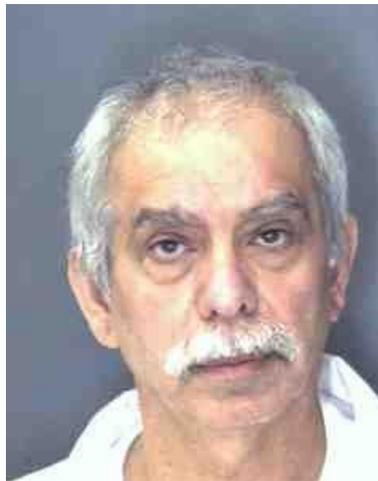
District Attorney Hoovler thanked the Town of Newburgh Police Department, the Town of Newburgh Fire Investigation Unit, the F.B.I, the N.Y.S Criminal Investigation Unit of the N.Y.S Department of Financial Services, and the N.Y.S Insurance Fund, for their investigation and arrest in the case.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Lara Morrison.

“Arson places the whole community at risk, particularly firefighters and other first responders,” said District Attorney Hoovler. “Arson cases are often difficult to solve since the very nature of the crime consumes evidence of how the crime was committed. The Town of Newburgh Police Department, the Town of Newburgh Fire Investigation Unit, the F.B.I, the N.Y.S Criminal Investigation Unit of the N.Y.S Department of Financial Services, and the N.Y.S Insurance Fund, aided by the District Attorney’s Office, worked tirelessly on this case to bring it to a successful conclusion. This case is only one example of how the close working relationship between different law enforcement agencies here in Orange County leads to difficult cases being solved.”

Maria T. Vullo, Superintendent of Financial Services, said: “This defendant sought to enrich himself by engineering an insurance fraud scheme that endangered the safety of the public. The Department of Financial Services is proud to have worked with District Attorney Hoovler and our law enforcement partners to bring this defendant to justice.”

A criminal charge is merely an allegation that a defendant has committed a violation of the criminal law, and it is not evidence of guilt. All defendants are presumed innocent and entitled to a fair trial, during which it will be the State’s burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.



Khaled Baroud