

NEWS RELEASE

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June 20, 2008

For Immediate Release

FORMER EMPLOYEE INDICTED FOR THE ARSON OF COPIA URBAN WINERY & MARKET

St. Louis, MO: Gilbert Summers was indicted on federal arson charges involving the fires that damaged and destroyed the Copia Urban Winery and Market, and the adjoining Vanguard Loft Apartments, United States Attorney Catherine L. Hanaway, Chief Joe Mokwa, St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department, Chief Dennis Jenkerson, St. Louis Fire Department and Jeffrey Fulton, Assistant Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives announced today.

“Our citizens, first responders and emergency workers from fire and police put their lives at risk. Arson is a federal crime because of the property damage caused to businesses in our community that affect interstate commerce. The out of state business tenants renting lofts in a booming area of downtown St. Louis, and the out of state connections and products required to operate a wine and market business are immense. But, most importantly, it was not just property losses--lives were at risk,” said Hanaway.

Police Chief Col. Joseph Mokwa of the Metropolitan Police Department stated: “Our Bomb & Arson Detectives spent countless hours working alongside the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms, investigating what the St. Louis Fire Department quickly determined was arson. In addition to destroying a business, this fire put the life of every person who lives in the adjoining loft apartments at risk. This indictment sends a message that this will not be tolerated in our community.”

St. Louis Fire Department Chief Dennis Jenkerson stated: He would like to recognize the hard work by the members of the St. Louis Fire Department Investigation Unit, Police Bomb & Arson, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Through the efforts of these agencies they were able to remove a dangerous arsonist from the streets of St. Louis.

ATF Assistant Special Agent in Charge Jeff Fulton stated: “The Fire at the Copia Urban Winery and Market impacted numerous lives and business. Arson is a violent crime and these victims deserve to see justice served. ATF is committed to continue working in partnership with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department and the U. S. Attorneys Office to ensure that we accomplish that goal.”

The indictment alleges that on December 29, 2007, Summers set fires to the Copia Urban Winery and Market, on 1122 Washington Avenue; and Vanguard Loft Apartments at 1110 Washington Avenue.

Summers, 26, St. Louis, was indicted by a federal grand jury on two felony counts of arson. He was arrested late Thursday afternoon by ATF agents, and is expected to appear in federal court sometime today.

If convicted, each count of arson carries a maximum penalty of imprisonment up to 20 years and/or fines up to 250,000.

Hanaway commended the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department Bomb and Arson Squad, the St. Louis Fire Department and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives for their work and investigation of this case. Assistant United States Attorney Matthew Drake is handling the case for the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

The charges set forth set forth in an indictment are merely accusations, and each defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.