



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates  
Northern District of Georgia

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CONTACT: Patrick Crosby

(404)581-6016

FAX (404)581-6160

## **DEFENDANTS PLEAD GUILTY TO DAMAGING ENVIRONMENT**

### ***Theft of Commercial Air Conditioners Released Ozone-Destroying Gas into Atmosphere***

GAINESVILLE, GA - DANIEL ARNOT, 26, of Eastanollee, Georgia; COREY BEARD, 22, of Eastanollee, Georgia; and JUSTIN JOYNER, 25, of Toccoa, Georgia, pleaded guilty in federal district court yesterday to conspiring to release ozone-depleting substances into the environment. ARNOT entered his guilty plea today. BEARD and JOYNER entered their guilty pleas on December 15, 2010.

“These three defendants have admitted to tearing apart industrial-sized air conditioners to steal the copper and aluminum parts to sell for scrap metal,” said United States Attorney Sally Quillian Yates. “When they did this, they released hundreds of pounds of dangerous, ozone-destroying substances into the atmosphere. Their greed not only hurt the businesses and establishments that lost their air conditioners in the sweltering Georgia summer, but it also harmed the environment – and that harm affects all of us. These defendants will now have to pay the consequences for their actions.”

According to United States Attorney Yates, the charges and other information presented in court: Beginning in early August 2008, ARNOT, BEARD, JOYNER, and a fourth defendant, SABRINA WESTBROOKS ARNOT, targeted businesses with commercial-sized air conditioners in Stephens, Hall, Franklin, and Hart Counties. ARNOT, working with his wife WESTBROOKS ARNOT or with his other accomplices, BEARD and JOYNER, dismantled the air conditioning units so that they could steal the copper and aluminum parts. To steal the copper parts, they had to cut a copper coil in each unit.

Cutting this coil released hydrochlorofluorocarbon 22 into the atmosphere. Hydrochlorofluorocarbon 22, also known by the brand name Freon, is the cooling substance that regulates a room’s temperature. Established research shows that hydrochlorofluorocarbon 22 depletes the ozone layer, which protects people from harmful ultraviolet radiation.

After dismantling the air conditioners, the defendants stored the copper and aluminum parts in a storage room that ARNOT had rented. After gathering enough stolen parts, they would sell the copper and aluminum parts to scrap metal recycling businesses. ARNOT and WESTBROOKS ARNOT were arrested on September 4, 2008, after stealing three air conditioning units from Cornerstone Baptist Church in Hartwell, Georgia. After ARNOT and WESTBROOKS ARNOT were arrested, JOYNER went to ARNOT's storage room to destroy evidence of their crimes. ARNOT, BEARD, and JOYNER admitted that they dismantled approximately 35 air conditioning units from 14 establishments, including businesses, an Elks Lodge, a golf course, and a church.

ARNOT, BEARD, and JOYNER were indicted in June 2010 on one count of conspiring to release ozone-depleting substances into the environment and twelve counts of releasing such substances into the environment. ARNOT pleaded guilty to all thirteen counts in the indictment. He could receive a maximum sentence of 65 years in prison and a fine of up to \$3,250,000. BEARD pleaded guilty to conspiring to release ozone-depleting substances into the atmosphere and nine counts of releasing the substances into the environment. He could receive a maximum sentence of 50 years and a fine of up to \$2,500,000. JOYNER pleaded guilty to conspiring to release ozone-depleting substances into the atmosphere and one count of releasing such substances into the atmosphere. He could receive a maximum sentence of 10 years and a fine of up to \$500,000. In determining the actual sentence, the Court will consider the United States Sentencing Guidelines, which are not binding but provide appropriate sentencing ranges for most offenders.

Sentencing for ARNOT, BEARD and JOYNER have not yet been scheduled. Co-defendant SABRINA WESTBROOKS ARNOT awaits trial.

This case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Assistant United States Attorney Paul Jones is prosecuting the case.

For further information please contact Sally Q. Yates, 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.justice.gov/usao/gan](http://www.justice.gov/usao/gan).