



Hernando County Sheriff's Office

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Media Release

From: Denise M. Moloney
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Re: Man Charged with Arson After Setting HCSO Patrol Vehicle on Fire - 2022-36448

Date: December 8, 2022

On 12-07-22 just before 5 p.m., 9-1-1 operators began receiving several calls regarding a Vehicle Fire. Callers reported the vehicle was parked in the parking lot of an apartment complex in the area of Northcliffe Boulevard and Portillo Road in Spring Hill, and that the vehicle was a Hernando County Sheriff's Office marked patrol vehicle.

Several patrol deputies, along with Hernando County Fire and Emergency Services, arrived on scene and promptly extinguished the fire.

Upon inspection, severe damage was observed in and around the rear passenger portion of the vehicle, near the gas tank. Further investigation revealed trash and other items located directly under the gas tank, near the back passenger wheel. Detectives believed the items were placed to deliberately set the patrol vehicle on fire.

Another vehicle (personally owned by a resident), which was parked in close proximity to the patrol vehicle, also sustained damage from the fire.

As detectives initially began their investigation, a male approached the crime scene and stated he was responsible for setting the fire. The male, later identified as Anthony Thomas Tarduno, was detained by patrol deputies.

During an interview with detectives, Tarduno again admitted to starting the fire. Tarduno told detectives he was "intoxicated" and when he gets "drunk" he does "stupid things."

Tarduno went on to tell detectives he had been drinking at a bar on Northcliffe Boulevard. He left the bar on foot just before 4:30 p.m. While walking, Tarduno noticed the patrol vehicle and decided he'd like to set it on fire. He went to a nearby dumpster and grabbed a bag of garbage. Tarduno then placed the bag under the patrol vehicle and used a lighter to set it ablaze.

After setting the fire, Tarduno went back to the bar.

Several minutes later, Tarduno said he "felt bad" and returned to the scene to confess.

Tarduno was cooperative with the investigation, even telling detectives he was a "professional arsonist" and has been arrested and convicted for similar offenses. Tarduno also stated he did not target the vehicle because it was a patrol car, and any car that had been parked there would have been set on fire.

Detectives placed **Anthony Thomas Tarduno DOB/06-05-1974** under arrest, charging him as follows:

- Arson (2 counts)
- Bond - \$30,000.

Hernando County Booking records show Tarduno was arrested in **2018** for DWLSR, **2012** for Arson, and in **2011** for Indecent Exposure.

Tarduno remains in the Hernando County Detention Center.

Hernando County Crime Stoppers / Anonymous Tips

If you have information on this case, please contact Hernando County Crime Stoppers. You will remain anonymous!

Hernando County Crime Stoppers can be reached by phone at 1-866-990-TIPS (8477) or **TIPS from a cell phone.

You may also submit your tip via the internet at <http://www.hernandocountycrimestoppers.com> .

You will remain anonymous and also be eligible for a reward up to \$5,000 cash!

The Office of Sheriff:

The Office of the Sheriff is established by the Florida Constitution. As a constitutional officer, the Sheriff has the exclusive authority to administer his or her agency and is responsible for preserving the peace throughout the entire county, carrying out the laws of the state, the orders of Florida courts, and the ordinances of the Board of County Commissioners. The Sheriff is the chief law enforcement and correctional officer of the county.

Sheriff Al Nienhuis was initially appointed as the Sheriff of Hernando County by the Governor in January of 2011. He was then elected by the people of Hernando County in 2012, ran unopposed in

2016, and was re-elected in 2020. Sheriff Nienhuis remains accountable to the people of Hernando County.