



U.S. Department of Justice

Mark J. Lesko

*Acting United States Attorney
Eastern District of New York*

*271 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, New York 11201*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact:

John Marzulli

United States Attorney's Office

(718) 254-6323

PRESS RELEASE

BROOKLYN MAN CHARGED WITH MOLOTOV COCKTAIL ATTACK ON NYPD OFFICERS

A criminal complaint was filed today in federal court in Brooklyn charging Lionel Virgile with attempted arson by allegedly using an improvised incendiary device commonly known as a "Molotov Cocktail" to damage and destroy a New York City Police Department (NYPD) vehicle while police officers were inside the vehicle. Virgile was arrested on Saturday and made his initial appearance this afternoon before United States Magistrate Judge Robert M. Levy. The defendant was ordered detained pending trial.

Mark J. Lesko, Acting United States Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, William F. Sweeney, Jr., Assistant Director-in-Charge, Federal Bureau of Investigation, New York Field Office (FBI), and Dermot F. Shea, Commissioner, NYPD, announced the arrest and charges.

"As alleged, the defendant deliberately sought to severely injure an NYPD police officer by throwing bleach at his eyes and to ignite an NYPD vehicle with officers inside by hurling a lit Molotov cocktail at it," stated Acting United States Attorney Lesko. "This Office simply will not tolerate the intentional infliction of physical harm on NYPD officers while they are working to protect our communities." Mr. Lesko thanked the Kings County District Attorney's Office for their assistance with the investigation.

"Virgile's alleged attack on members of the NYPD is yet another reminder of the danger law enforcement officers face on a daily basis—and today's charges should serve as a reminder to all that this type of behavior will be met with a swift response. As Virgile has now learned, the federal charge he faces carries the potential for a lengthy federal prison sentence. The NYPD's quick response in neutralizing this threat to the public is a testament to its professionalism and dedication to keeping our city safe," stated FBI Assistant Director-in-Charge Sweeney.

"Attacks on uniformed police officers, as alleged in this federal complaint, are not only crimes against our sworn public servants but are unacceptable assaults on the fabric of society. I commend our NYPD officers and our partners in the FBI and the United States

Attorney's Office in the Eastern District of New York for working closely to ensure that Lionel Virgile, the accused assailant in this case, faces justice," stated NYPD Commissioner Shea.

According to the complaint, in the morning of April 17, 2021, NYPD officers in a marked vehicle observed Virgile drive his Lincoln Town Car through a steady red traffic light at the intersection of Clarendon Road and East 45th Street in East Flatbush. When the officers approached Virgile's car, he opened the driver side door and threw a cup containing a chemical substance in one of the NYPD officer's eyes that was later determined to be bleach. The officer sustained chemical burns on his face and has since been discharged from the hospital. Virgile fled in the Lincoln Town car and was pursued by officers in another NYPD vehicle. Approximately 10 minutes later, Virgile pulled over, exited his Lincoln Town Car and threw a lit Molotov cocktail at the NYPD vehicle pursuing him. The Molotov cocktail struck the windshield of the NYPD vehicle and shattered on the sidewalk. The Molotov cocktail consisted of a glass beverage bottle containing gasoline and a cloth wick. The defendant subsequently crashed into a parked car on Snyder Avenue and was apprehended by the NYPD. Five additional Molotov cocktails and a red jerry can were found in Virgile's Lincoln Town Car.

The charges in the complaint are allegations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty. If convicted, Virgile faces up to 20 years' imprisonment.

The government's case is being handled by the Office's National Security and Cybercrime Section. Assistant United States Attorneys Sara K. Winik and Joy Lurinsky are in charge of the prosecution.

The Defendant:

LIONEL VIRGILE

Age: 44

Brooklyn, New York

E.D.N.Y. Docket No. 21-MJ-483