

# NEWS RELEASE

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**June 6, 2018**

## **Arsonist, armed robbers convicted by Violent Crimes Team**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – The Mecklenburg County District Attorney's Violent Crimes Team recently convicted 20 defendants of crimes such as arson and robbery with a dangerous weapon. The defendants entered their guilty pleas May 29-June 1, 2018, in courtroom 5350 before The Honorable Karen Eady-Williams, Superior Court Judge. Court was not held on May 28, 2018, in observance of Memorial Day.

Among those convicted and sent to prison were:

Jesus Lopez, 20, pled guilty to 32 counts of first-degree arson. Lopez was sentenced to 51-74 months in prison. In October 2017, Lopez set fire to an apartment building on Farm Pond Lane in Charlotte. At the time, Lopez' ex-girlfriend was residing in the building. Several victims suffered injuries while escaping the blaze. When interviewed by police, Lopez admitted to starting the fire.

John Benitez, 19, pled guilty to 1) two counts of robbery with a dangerous weapon and 2) discharging a weapon into an occupied dwelling. Benitez also admitted to violating his probation for a previous conviction. Benitez was sentenced to 73-99 months in prison.

Jahdae Hughes, 17, pled guilty to 1) assault with a deadly weapon inflicting serious injury and 2) attempted robbery with a dangerous weapon. Hughes was sentenced to 51-74 months in prison.

Rashaan Bauer, 23, pled guilty to 1) three counts of robbery with a dangerous weapon and 2) attempted robbery with a dangerous weapon. Bauer was sentenced to 51-74 months in prison.

Joshua Burns, 20, pled guilty to robbery with a dangerous weapon. Burns was sentenced to 38-58 months in prison.

James Smith, 23, pled guilty to possession of a firearm by a convicted felon. Smith was sentenced to 12-25 months in prison.

*Note: Almost all guilty pleas entered in criminal administrative court are the result of an agreed upon plea arrangement between the State and the defendant, which is then approved by the sentencing judge. For more information about why most cases must be resolved by plea negotiation instead of jury trial, please visit the "Understanding Criminal Court" section of the DA's website at [www.charmeckda.com](http://www.charmeckda.com).*

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