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**Flatbush Landlord Indicted for Manslaughter in Connection
With Fatal Fire That Left One Dead and Nine Injured**
Defendant Illegally Subdivided Apartments Leading to Unsafe Conditions

Brooklyn District Attorney Ken Thompson, together with New York City Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro, New York City Buildings Commissioner Rick D. Chandler and New York City Department of Investigation Commissioner Mark G. Peters, today announced that the owner of a Flatbush apartment building that was illegally subdivided has been indicted on manslaughter and other charges stemming from a fatal fire that left one tenant dead and nine others, including four children, injured.

District Attorney Thompson said, “This defendant was well aware of the danger of running an illegal SRO, but chose to ignore numerous violations and vacate orders issued over many years resulting in this devastating fire that killed a young man and injured many others.”

Commissioner Nigro said, “Once again, we see the tragedy that unfolds when profit is put before safety. This fire claimed the life of one New Yorker, left nine others with serious injuries, and put more than 100 FDNY members’ lives in danger. I commend the great work of our Fire Marshals and every agency that worked together to bring this case forward and sought justice for the innocent life lost.”

Commissioner Chandler said, “This case shows how illegally-divided apartments can cost lives. The building owner’s reckless disregard for both the law and his responsibility to protect his tenants cost a young man his life. The Department of Buildings is proud to work with District Attorney Thompson and our partner agencies, and to provide critical technical expertise to hold accountable bad actors who put profit ahead of safety.”

Commissioner Peters said, “This charged case demonstrates the disastrous and tragic consequences of skirting the rules and disregarding building safety regulations. DOI reviewed the history of the property and case specifics, uncovering multiple violations issued by the Department of Buildings and false documentation the defendant is charged with using to cover up his neglect and unlawful behavior. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to expose those who endanger the lives of others for their own enrichment.”

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Luckner Lorient, 78, of East Flatbush, Brooklyn. He was arraigned today before Brooklyn Supreme Court Justice Guy J. Mangano, Jr., on a 14-count indictment in which he is charged with second-degree manslaughter, criminally negligent homicide, second-degree reckless endangerment, third-degree assault and endangering the welfare of a child. The defendant was ordered held on bail of \$1 million cash or \$2 million bond and ordered to return to court on August 10, 2016. He faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted of the top count.

The District Attorney said that, according to the indictment, Lorient was the owner of 1434 Flatbush Avenue, a three-story, wood-frame building with a commercial space on the first floor, residential apartments on the second and third floors, and a cellar. The second and third floor apartments were designed to be one-family railroad apartments, but had allegedly been illegally converted by Lorient into SROs (single-room occupancy), with six separate rooms on the second floor and five separate rooms on the first floor. A total of 23 tenants occupied those 11 rooms.

On November 19, 2014, at approximately 12:39 a.m., a fire enveloped 1434 Flatbush Avenue, according to the indictment, after a water cooler on the second floor ignited as a result of being connected to an overloaded electrical circuit. The fire spread quickly to the floor, walls and ceiling of a living room and simultaneously spread through the second floor hallway and up the stairs to the third floor. Twenty of the 23 tenants were home at the time, most of them sleeping.

The tenants on the second floor escaped on their own or with the assistance of firefighters. The tenants on the third floor were either trapped or overcome by smoke and lost consciousness. Firefighters rescued six unconscious tenants from rooms and hallways on the third floor. Many of the tenants suffered moderate to severe smoke inhalation and three were seriously burned. A 24-year-old man, Jeff Frederic, died of smoke inhalation.

Lorient, who was the pastor of a church located on the ground floor, is alleged to have recklessly disregarded safety issues, despite numerous violations and vacate orders variously issued by the New York City Department of Buildings, Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the New York City Fire Department dating back more than 10 years. It is alleged that Lorient filed false documents asserting he was no longer operating the building as an illegal SRO, but after inspections confirming his assertions he quickly converted the building back to the illegal SRO.

Furthermore, it is alleged, because of the conversion there were power strips and multiple extension cords in every room, and stretched into hallways, and electrical outages due to overloads were a common occurrence – which Lorient knew because of notices of violations received from HPD. In fact, according to the investigation, nearly every room had a television and refrigerator and many had air conditioners, space heaters, microwaves, cell phone chargers, laptops and hot plates – seriously comprising the electrical system. A tenant on the second floor had an electric water cooler. The overloaded system caused a wire to the water cooler to overheat and erupt.

In addition, the building failed to offer two means of egress, as required by law, and the single fire escape for the building was inoperable.

The case was investigated by Fire Marshal John Orlando of the New York City Fire Department, Barry Romm, Chief of Investigations of the New York City Department of Investigation, Executive Engineer Yegal Shamash, Principal Engineer Marco Frias and Electrical Engineer Mathher Abbassi of the Department of Buildings and Detective William Simon of the New York City Police Department Cold Case Squad.

The District Attorney thanked the New York City Fire Department, the New York City Department of Buildings, the New York City Department of Investigation, the New York City Police Department and the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development for its thorough investigation of this case.

The case is being prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Samantha Magnani and Assistant District Attorney Xiao Chen, of the District Attorney's Frauds Bureau, under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Felice Sontupe, Bureau Chief, and the overall supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney William E. Schaeffer, Chief of the District Attorney's Investigations Division, and Assistant District Attorney Patricia McNeill, Deputy Chief.

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An indictment is merely an accusation and not proof of a defendant's guilt