



NEWS RELEASE

Chicago Police Department

Larry Snelling
Superintendent

For Immediate Release
June 17, 2026

Contact: Office of Communications
312-745-6110

Offender Charged with Multiple Counts of Hate Crime and Arson



Offender: Merlin Lu, 21
1400 block of S. Halsted
Chicago, Illinois

Charge: One (1) felony count – Dmg St Prop / Start Fire >\$500 - \$10K
One (1) felony count – Arson / Real / Personal prop > \$150
Two (2) felony counts – Hate Crime / Park / Community Cntr
One (1) misdemeanor count – Disorderly Conduct - Breach of Peace
One (1) misdemeanor count – Reckless Conduct
One (1) misdemeanor count – Crim Damage to Property < \$500
One (1) misdemeanor count – Cross Burning To Intimidate

Court: Detention Hearing – 2600 S. California – June 18, 2026

Narrative: The above offender was arrested by members of the Chicago Police Department's Major Crimes Division and the U.S. Marshals Great Lakes Regional Fugitive Task Force on June 15, 2026, in the 1400 block of S. Halsted. He was identified as the offender who, on June 9, 2026, committed a hate crime by starting a fire that caused damage to city property in the 600 block of S. Columbus (1st District). The offender was placed into custody and charged accordingly. The investigation included assistance from the FBI, Illinois State Police, Illinois State Police Forensic Lab, University of Illinois Chicago Police, Great Lakes Regional Fugitive Task Force, Cook County State's Attorney's Office, and the community. No additional information is available at this time.

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