



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF KERN

CIVIC CENTER JUSTICE BUILDING
1215 TRUXTUN AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301
(661) 868-2340, FAX: (661) 868-2700

CYNTHIA J. ZIMMER
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JOSEPH A. KINZEL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

KENNETH M. RUSSELL
ASSISTANT DISTRICT ATTORNEY

September 2, 2026
MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT:
DDA Louis Jameson
(661) 868-5553

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Approved by: CJZ
Press Release 26-63

Jury Finds Daniel Montes Guilty of Arson to Commit Insurance Fraud
People v. Daniel Montes: Kern County Superior Court Case 26DFA00004

(Bakersfield) - Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced an insurance fraud conviction involving arson. On August 31, 2026, in a case prosecuted by Deputy District Attorney Louis Jameson, a Kern County jury found Daniel Montes guilty of arson and automobile insurance fraud. On September 1, 2026, the jury found true that Montes had two prior strike convictions. The jury also found true the following aggravating factors: The crime involved damage of great monetary value, Montes's prior convictions were numerous and of increasing seriousness, he had served a prior term in prison, he was on probation when this crime was committed, and that his prior performance under supervision was unsatisfactory.

In December 2025, Daniel Montes drove a Jeep Gladiator from the Hard Rock Casino to a rural area outside of McFarland to remove the rims and set the car on fire. The crime was discovered when Montes made calls to his girlfriend, who was an inmate at the Kern County jail, telling her that he had a job that would pay him enough to bail her out of jail. During the jail calls, Montes explained to his girlfriend that he was hired to take the car and burn it so the owner could make an insurance claim on the car because the owner could not afford the payments on the Jeep. After Montes was arrested, his phone was searched, revealing not only further conversations with other conspirators about the plan to take the car, but also videos of the Jeep being set on fire.

On January 8, 2025, the McFarland Police Department recovered the burned vehicle. When officers arrived, they found the Jeep destroyed and the rims stripped off. An insurance claim was filed by the owner of the vehicle, but it was quickly denied due to the results of the McFarland Police Department's investigation.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction, stating; "The District Attorney's Office has a dedicated unit focused on combating the various types of insurance fraud that occur in our community. Submitting false insurance claims is a serious crime, and as insurance fraud increases, so do

insurance premiums for everyone else. If you see something that appears suspicious or fraudulent, I urge the community to report it.”

Sentencing is set for October 1, 2026, before the Honorable Eric Bradshaw in Department 3 of the Kern County Superior Court. Montes is a third strike offender and as such faces an elevated sentence of up to 25 years to life, plus 11 years and 4 months.

If you suspect or have reason to believe Auto Insurance Fraud is occurring in Kern County, please call the District Attorney’s Office Fraud Hotline at 1-800-619-3039 or email KCDAFraudTips@kernda.org.

The prosecution in this case was supported by the California Department of Insurance Automobile Insurance Fraud Program.

Daniel Montes:

