

Beat: News

Huge blaze in Los Angeles was caused by arson, investigators say

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USPA News - A massive fire earlier this month that destroyed a downtown apartment building under construction in downtown Los Angeles was caused by an act of arson, investigators have determined, but no arrests have been made so far. The fire at 900 West Temple Street in downtown Los Angeles in the early morning hours of December 8 destroyed the seven-story Da Vinci Apartment Complex, which was under construction, and damaged a nearby high-rise structure as well as the Harbor 110 Freeway.

The enormous blaze lit up the night sky and was visible for many miles, but no one was hurt. The Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD) said late Thursday that investigators recovered sufficient evidence to eliminate all known potential accidental causes and have determined that the fire was intentionally set. Specific details about the investigation or the fire itself were not immediately released as a criminal investigation is ongoing. "The work at the crime scene is finished, however our investigation is not over," said Special Agent-in-Charge Carlos Canino of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). "ATF will continue to work together with our state and local partners to investigate this crime and bring those responsible to justice." Investigators from ATF's National Response Team (NRT) and the Los Angeles Fire Department have so far sifted through 75,000 square feet (6,967 square meters) of debris, took photographs of the scene, recovered potential evidence for analysis and conducted many interviews throughout the community. Investigators continue to seek information to identify two potential witnesses who were seen in video footage taken on the morning of the fire, but neither are considered suspects or persons of interest. "Investigators have identified them as being in the area of the fire, and merely wish to interview them," the LAFD said in a statement. Battalion Chief Robert Nelson, the head of the LAFD's Arson/Counter-Terrorism Section, described the investigation as large and complex. "We continue to work with the ATF, LAPD and other law enforcement agencies to vigorously pursue this investigation," he said. "Arson is a serious crime and we will use all of our available resources to arrest and prosecute any individuals involved in any arson fire in Los Angeles." The fire that destroyed the Da Vinci Apartment Complex caused an estimated \$20 million to \$30 million in damages, plus additional damages to nearby businesses and Caltrans property.

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