



Department of Justice

JUSTIN E. HERDMAN
UNITED STATES ATTORNEY FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO

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Mike Tobin
(216) 622-3651

WWW.JUSTICE.GOV

Vicki Anderson
(216) 522-1400

Ohio man arrested on terrorism charge after planning attack on Jewish synagogue in Toledo area

An Ohio man was arrested and charged in federal court after planning an attack on a synagogue in the Toledo area.

Damon M. Joseph, 21, of Holland, Ohio, was charged with one count of attempting to provide material support to ISIS.

Joseph was arrested Friday evening after he took possession of two AR-15 rifles.

“This man spent months planning a violent terrorist attack on behalf of ISIS here in the United States, and eventually targeted a Jewish synagogue in the Toledo area,” said Justin E. Herdman, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio. “The charges describe a calculated man fueled by an ideology of hatred and intent on killing innocent people. The FBI, our police and Justice Department employees are to be credited for working to stop the defendant before he could act.”

FBI Acting Special Agent in Charge Jeff Fortunato said: “In a matter of months, Damon Joseph progressed from radicalized, virtual jihadist to attack planner. He ultimately decided to target two Toledo-area synagogues for a mass-casualty attack in the name of ISIS. Joseph will now be accountable in a court of law for his pursuit of a violent act of terrorism upon our fellow citizens attending their desired house of worship.”

According to an affidavit filed in U.S. District Court in Toledo:

Earlier in 2018, Joseph drew the attention of law enforcement by posting photographs of knives and firearms on his social media accounts, as well as a photograph originally distributed by the

media wing of ISIS. This activity led to multiple interactions between Joseph and undercover FBI agents.

During his communication with undercover agents, Joseph stated he was a supporter of ISIS. In September, Joseph made videos that he sent to the undercover agent, hoping they would be used to recruit people to ISIS. He also complained that the mosque he attended was critical of ISIS.

Joseph stated he would be willing to participate in violent attacks and operations. For example, on October 21, Joseph expressed support for “martyrdom operations” and stated: “what must be done, must be done” and “there will always be casualties of war.”

On October 30, Joseph and the undercover communicated regarding the mass shooting at a Jewish synagogue in Pittsburgh. Joseph stated: “I admire what the guy did with the shooting actually.” He added: “I can see myself carrying out this type of operation inshallah. They wouldn’t even [an attack] expect in my area...”

Over the next few weeks, Joseph continued stating he wanted to participate in an attack on behalf of ISIS. On December 2 he forwarded a document that laid out his plans for an attack, using the name “Abdullah Ali Yusuf” for himself. In the memo, he described plans to attack where the most people are gathered, inflict mass casualties and make sure no one escaped.

Joseph then stated that he did not see this necessarily as “a martyrdom operation” as his plan accounted for an escape and potential combat with law enforcement.

On December 4, Joseph stated he was deciding between two synagogues in the area to attack. He stated the choice would depend on “Which one will have the most people, what time and what day. Go big or go home.”

The next day, Joseph met with an undercover FBI agent and discussed conducting a mass shooting at a synagogue. Joseph identified two synagogues he viewed as targets in the greater Toledo area, and discussed the types of weapons he believed would be able to inflict mass casualties.

Joseph made written notes about the firearms he wanted and provided them to the undercover agent, stating he wanted AR 15s, AK 47, Glocks and ammunition.

On December 6, Joseph stated met with an undercover in the Toledo area and stated it would be ideal to attack two synagogues, but that it was probably more realistic to only attack one. Joseph also stated specifically that he wanted to kill a rabbi.

Also on December 6, Joseph wrote the name and address of the synagogue where the attack was to occur. Joseph stated he had conducted research to determine when the Jewish sabbath was so that more people would be present. Joseph pulled up photographs of the inside of the synagogue and said he wanted the attack to begin in the sanctuary. Joseph told the undercover agent that he would hide two AR-15s at his house once the undercover purchased them.

Later that day, the undercover agent told Joseph that he purchased rifles for the attack. The two met on Dec. 7 at a predetermined location and Joseph took a black duffel bag carrying two AR-15 type weapons. Joseph was then arrested.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force, which is comprised of members of the FBI, Homeland Security and Investigations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Ohio State Highway Patrol and Toledo Police Department, is leading the ongoing investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Baeppler and Trial Attorney Josh Champagne with the Justice Department's Counterterrorism Section.

If convicted, the defendant's sentence will be determined by the Court after review of factors unique to this case, including the defendant's prior criminal record, if any, the defendant's role in the offense and the characteristics of the violation. In all cases, the sentence will not exceed the statutory maximum and in most cases it will be less than the maximum.

A charge is not evidence of guilt. A defendant is entitled to a fair trial in which it will be the government's burden to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.