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KANSAS MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN PLOT TO EXPLODE CAR BOMB AT FORT RILEY IN MANHATTAN, KANSAS

John T. Booker Jr., 21, of Topeka, Kansas, pleaded guilty today to attempting to detonate a vehicle bomb on the Fort Riley military base in Manhattan, Kansas.

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin and U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom of the District of Kansas made the announcement.

Booker pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Carlos Murguia of the District of Kansas to one count of attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and one count of attempted destruction of government property by fire or explosion. Sentencing will be scheduled at a later date. The parties have stipulated to a sentence of 30 years in federal prison.

“John Booker admitted that he intended to kill U.S. military personnel on American soil in the name of ISIL,” said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. “Thankfully, law enforcement was able to safely identify and disrupt this threat to the brave men and women who risk their lives to defend our country. The National Security Division’s highest priority is countering terrorist threats and protecting American lives by holding accountable those who plot to attack us.”

“If this defendant had succeeded, American soldiers would have died,” said U.S. Attorney Grissom. “The investigators and the attorneys who worked on this case were our line of defense against terrorism. They kept us safe.”

In his guilty plea, Booker admitted he intended to kill American soldiers and to assist ISIL’s fight against the United States. His plan called for constructing a bomb containing 1,000 pounds of ammonium nitrate. Booker intended to trigger the bomb himself and die in the process, and filmed a video he intended Americans to see after his death.

“You sit in your homes and think this war is just over in Iraq,” he said in the video. “Today we will bring the Islamic State straight to your doorstep.”

Unbeknownst to Booker, the bomb that he constructed was made with inert materials, and the two men working with him were undercover informants for the FBI.

The FBI began investigating Booker in March 2014 after he posted on his Facebook page that he wanted to commit jihad. Booker admitted that he tried to enlist in the U.S. Army in order to commit an insider attack against American soldiers like the one at Fort Hood in Texas, but his deadly plans were thwarted when he was denied entry into the Army. In October 2014, Booker began communicating with an undercover FBI informant. He told the undercover FBI informant that he dreamed of being a fighter in the Middle East, and proposed capturing and killing an American soldier.

In March 2015, Booker was introduced to another FBI informant who he believed would help him plan an attack. Booker said he wanted to detonate a suicide bomb because he couldn't be captured, all the evidence would be destroyed, and he would be guaranteed to hit his target. On March 10, 2015, Booker made a video filmed at Freedom Park near Marshall Army Airfield at Fort Riley in which he pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the leader of ISIL. That month, he rented a storage unit in Topeka where the bomb would be assembled.

On April 10, 2015, Booker and the informants drove to an area near Fort Riley that Booker believed to be a little-used utility gate where they could enter Fort Riley undetected. He was arrested when he made the final connections on the device that he believed would arm the bomb.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Tony Mattivi and David Smith of the District of Kansas, and Trial Attorneys Josh Parecki and Rebecca Magnone of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.