

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Middle District of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Florida Man Sentenced To 10 Years In Federal Prison On Bomb Charge

Jacksonville, FL – Joshua Ryne Goldberg, 23, of Orange Park, Florida, was sentenced to 10 years in federal prison, to be followed by a lifetime of supervised release, for attempted malicious damage and destruction by an explosive of a building. Goldberg pleaded guilty on Dec. 20, 2017.

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John C. Demers, U.S. Attorney Maria Chapa Lopez for the Middle District of Florida, and Special Agent Charles P. Spencer of the FBI's Jacksonville Field Office made the announcement after sentencing by U.S. District Judge Brian Davis.

According to the plea agreement, in the summer of 2015, the FBI and law enforcement officers from Australia began investigating the online name "AusWitness" and determined that it was Goldberg. He had come to the attention of law enforcement due in part to his postings concerning the May 3, 2015, attack by two gunmen at the Muhammad Art Exhibit and Contest in Garland, Texas. Prior to the attack, Goldberg posted a map of the location of the contest and urged anyone in the area to attack the event. Goldberg's posting was copied by gunman Elton Simpson, one of the two individuals killed during the May 3, 2015, attack. The FBI later located an online posting in which Goldberg took responsibility for inspiring the Garland attack, as well as two other planned attacks.

In late July 2015, an FBI confidential human source (CHS) began exchanging messages with Goldberg as "AusWitness" on social media. Between July and mid-August 2015, Goldberg discussed getting an individual in Melbourne, Australia to carry out a terrorist attack and to have the CHS commit a bombing in the United States. During portions of those conversations, Goldberg sent the CHS five website links containing instructions for making an explosive device, including pipe bombs and other incendiary devices. On Aug. 20, 2015, Goldberg stated that he was thinking of pipe bombs at a large public event and later said that a pressure cooker bomb may be better. Later that month, Goldberg told the CHS that he had found the "perfect place" to target on Sept. 13, 2015, and sent the CHS a link to a Kansas City, Missouri firefighter's event that memorialized first responders that had been killed in the September 11th attacks. On Aug. 27, 2015, Goldberg instructed the CHS to place the bomb near the crowd at the memorial event and to ensure it was very well hidden.

The following day, Goldberg provided the CHS with a list of items to use in the pressure cooker bomb, including shards of metal, nails and broken glass. He then instructed the CHS to dip screws and other shrapnel in rat poison before putting them in the pressure cooker bomb in order to inflict more casualties. Goldberg stated he would post a video of the bombing. A forensic analysis of the bomb making information determined that it could have been used to make explosives that would cause property damage, personal injury and/or death.

This case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) and the Clay County Sheriff's Office. Members of the Jacksonville JTTF include the FBI, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Border Patrol, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Highway Patrol, the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office, and the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin C. Frein of the Middle District of Florida, with assistance provided by Trial Attorney Jennifer Levy of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section.

A circular logo featuring a blue fingerprint pattern. The letters "IPT" are prominently displayed in the center in a large, bold, white font with a slight shadow effect.

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