

Justice News

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Federal Bureau of Investigation Arrests Milwaukee Man Who Planned Mass Shooting; Man Charged with Possession of Machineguns

Acting United States Attorney Gregory J. Haanstad and Special Agent in Charge Robert J. Shields of the FBI's Milwaukee Division announced today that Milwaukee resident Samy Mohamed Hamzeh, 23, has been charged with possessing machineguns and a silencer.

According to the criminal complaint, Hamzeh had been under investigation since September 2015. The investigation revealed that, in October 2015, Hamzeh planned to travel to Jordan, enter the West Bank, and conduct an attack on Israeli soldiers and citizens living in the West Bank. Hamzeh later abandoned those plans and began to focus on conducting an attack in the United States.

According to the criminal complaint, Hamzeh has engaged in extensive conversations with two confidential sources (referred to here as CS-1 and CS-2). Those conversations, which were in Arabic, were monitored, recorded, and translated by the FBI beginning in October 2015.

During those recorded conversations, Hamzeh explained that he wanted to commit a domestic act of violence and, earlier this month, he settled on a Masonic temple in Milwaukee as his target.

On January 19, 2016, Hamzeh, CS-1 and CS-2 took a guided tour of the Masonic temple, during which they learned meeting schedules and where people would be located during meetings. In a recorded conversation after they left the temple, Hamzeh, discussed his plans with CS-1 and CS-2. In that conversation, Hamzeh reaffirmed his intention to commit an armed attack on the temple and discussed in further detail how they would carry out the attack.

Hamzeh said that they would need two machineguns so that they each would have one (Hamzeh indicated that one CS already had a machinegun), and also said that they would need three silencers:

- “We want two machineguns, you now have one, so we want two more, and we need three silencers, that’s it. Find out how much all together these will cost, and then we will march.”
- “We want two, like the machinegun you have. . . . And we need silencers. . . . Three, yes three silencers, and that’s it.”

- “. . . each one has a weapon, each one has a silencer gun, the operation will be one hundred percent successful. I am telling you, to go without silencer gun, you will be exposed from the beginning.”

Hamzeh also explained to CS1 and CS2 that, when they executed the attack at the temple, one of the three of them would have to stay at the main door while the others went upstairs to kill the people who would be meeting there:

- “one of us will stay at the door at the entrance and lock the door down, he will be at the main door down, two will get to the lift up, they will enter the room, and spray everyone in the room. The one who is standing downstairs will spray anyone he finds. We will shoot them, kill them and get out. We will walk and walk, after a while, we will be covered as if it is cold, and we’ll take the covers off and dump them in a corner and keep on walking, as if nothing happened, as if everything is normal. But one has to stand on the door, because if no one stood at the door, people will be going in and out, if people came in from outside and found out what is going on, everything is busted.”
- “As long as the one on the door understands he has bigger responsibility than the others. For your information, he has to take care of everyone around him, the corners and the one that wants to go, he has to annihilate everyone, there is no one left, I mean when we go into a room, we will be killing everyone, that’s it, this is our duty, as for the one at the door, he must have 20/20 eye vision and always alert for all the traffic around him.”
- “I am telling you, as I was saying, all three of us get in together, one will go, to the one that is staying at the reception If she was alone, it is okay, if there were two of them, shoot both of them, do not let the blood show, shoot her from the bottom, two or three shots in her stomach and let her sit on the chair and push her to the front, as if she is sleeping, did you understand? Then stay downstairs, the other two will take the lift to the third floor, go directly to the room, open the door, shoot everyone, move fast even avoiding the lift and take the stairs running down. . . . Using the stairs, the third one on the door will notice us coming down, we will go out together. No one sees anything and no one knows anything. We leave, as if there is nothing, no running, no panic, just regular walking. We’ll get three head covers with three holes in them. . . . we’ll get in all three of us together, the minute we get in, we shoot whoever is in front of us, and all have to be eliminated. One stays down and two will go up quickly.
- “And we will eliminate everyone.”

Hamzeh also explained what his objectives were in committing the attack:

- “I am telling you, if this hit is executed, it will be known all over the world. . . . Sure, all over the world, all the Mujahedeen will be talking and they will be proud of us. . . such operations will increase in America, when they hear about it. The people will be scared and the operations will increase, and there will be problems all over, because more than one problem took place, and this will be the third problem, this will lead to people clashing with each other. This way we will be igniting it. I mean we are marching at the front of the war.”
- “They are all Masonic; they are playing with the world like a game, man, and we are like asses, we don’t know what is going on, these are the ones who are fighting, these are the ones that needs to be killed, not the Shi’iat, because these are the ones who are against us, these are the ones who are making living for us like hell.”

- “Thirty is excellent.If I got out, after killing thirty people, I will be happy 100%. . . . 100% happy, because these 30 will terrify the world.”

Hamzeh made plans to purchase machineguns and silencers from two individuals who, unbeknownst to Hamzeh, were undercover FBI agents. He met with them, along with CS-1 and CS-2, on January 25, 2016. The undercover agents displayed the weapons and a silencer to Hamzeh, told him that the weapons were capable of automatic fire, and explained to him the functioning of the selector switch that allowed the weapons to fire automatically. Hamzeh agreed to a price and paid it to the undercover agents, who then handed Hamzeh a bag containing two automatic weapons and a silencer. Hamzeh carried the bag to the vehicle in which he had traveled to the meeting, and he placed the bag in the trunk of the vehicle. He then was arrested and has been charged with illegally possessing machineguns.

Acting United States Attorney Gregory J. Haanstad said, “Samy Mohamed Hamzeh devised a detailed plan to commit a mass shooting intended to kill dozens of people. He also said that he wanted this mass shooting to be ‘known the world over’ and to ‘ignite’ broader clashes. It is difficult to calculate the injury and loss of life that was prevented by concerned citizens coming forward and by the tireless efforts of the FBI and the Joint Terrorism Task Force.”

Special Agent in Charge of the FBI Robert J. Shields said “The arrest of Samy Mohamed Hamzeh is the result of a well-coordinated undercover law enforcement action, at no time was the public’s safety placed in jeopardy. I would like to commend the efforts of the Joint Terrorism Task Force which includes our local and state law enforcement partners in thwarting an attack that could have resulted in significant injury and /or loss of life.”

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Paul L. Kanter.

The charges contained in the criminal complaint are only allegations; the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until he is proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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