



THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of New Jersey

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, February 1, 2023

Passaic County Man Arrested for Attempt to Firebomb Synagogue

NEWARK, N.J. – A Passaic County, New Jersey, man was arrested today for attempting to firebomb an Essex County, New Jersey, synagogue, U.S. Attorney Philip R. Sellinger announced.

Nicholas Malindretos, 26, of Clifton, New Jersey, is charged by complaint with one count of attempted use of fire to damage and destroy a building used in interstate commerce. He is scheduled to have his initial appearance in Newark federal court before U.S. Magistrate Judge Edward S. Kiel on Feb. 2, 2023.

"No one should find that their lives are at risk by exercising their faith," U.S. Attorney Sellinger said. "The defendant is alleged to have gone to a synagogue in the middle of the night and maliciously attempted to damage and destroy it using a firebomb. Protecting communities of faith and houses of worship is core to this office's mission. In response to this attempted attack, my office – together with our federal, state, and local partners – worked around the clock to investigate this matter swiftly. We will continue to devote whatever resources are necessary to keep our Jewish community and all New Jersey residents safe."

"I commend and thank the entire New Jersey law enforcement community for their seamless collaboration and tireless efforts to identify and apprehend the suspect in Sunday's attack on Temple Ner Tamid," New Jersey Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin said. "In New Jersey, we stand united against hate and bias, and we speak with one voice to show that our state will remain a place where all can live and worship freely and safely."

"Newark FBI and our law enforcement partners have been working around the clock since Sunday morning, after being notified someone targeted the Temple Ner Tamid in Bloomfield," FBI Special Agent in Charge James E. Dennehy said. "We allege Mr. Malindretos threw a Molotov cocktail at the doors of the synagogue. The speed and intensity of this investigation demonstrates our determination and dedication to protecting houses of worship and protecting their congregations. We take seriously all threats of hate and bias aimed at all religions and faiths, and we intend to hold accountable all those who target them."

"An alleged attempted firebombing on a house of worship is an attack against the entire community," acting Special Agent in Charge Bryan Miller of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives said. "We are honored to work side by side with our local, state, and federal partners to bring today's charge."

“The Essex County Prosecutor's Office has long understood that our interfaith community is one of the prime targets for hate,” Acting Prosecutor Theodore N. Stephens II said. “Although we are always troubled by events such as this, we are pleased by the extraordinary efforts undertaken by all involved in Essex County law enforcement to bring this charge.”

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

On Jan. 29, 2023, at 03:19 a.m., a surveillance camera at the Temple Ner Tamid Jewish Congregation in Bloomfield, New Jersey, recorded a person later identified as Malindretos as he approached the temple. He was wearing a black ski mask, a black or dark gray hooded sweatshirt with a white emblem of what appeared to be a skull and cross bones, black pants, dark shoes, and white gloves. The video showed Malindretos walking up to the front entrance area of the temple, pausing, and then igniting a wick on the top of a bottle. He then threw the bottle at the front glass doors of the temple and fled on foot.

A license plate reading device located nearby recorded a vehicle passing by shortly before and shortly after the incident. Law enforcement officers located the vehicle in Clifton and saw several items consistent with the video of the incident plainly visible inside. They obtained a search warrant for the vehicle. Video cameras in the area where the vehicle was parked captured the vehicle parking and a male individual with the same physical characteristics as Malindretos exiting the vehicle and entering a nearby building.

The count of attempted use of fire to damage and destroy a building used in interstate commerce is punishable by a minimum of five years in prison, a maximum of 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000.

U.S. Attorney Sellinger credited special agents of the FBI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Dennehy in Newark; special agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, under the direction of Acting of Special Agent in Charge Miller in Newark; the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety, under the direction of Attorney General Platkin; the Essex County Prosecutor's Office, under the direction of Acting Prosecutor Stephens, and the Bloomfield Police Department, under the direction of Director of Public Safety Samuel A. DeMaio, with the investigation leading to today's charge.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney R. Joseph Gribko of the U.S. Attorney's Office's Civil Rights Division.

The charge and allegations contained in the complaint are merely accusations, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

Attachment(s):

[Download Malindretos.Complaint.pdf](#)

Topic(s):

Hate Crimes

Component(s):

[USAO - New Jersey](#)

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