

# Pennsylvania Man Sentenced for Terrorism Solicitation and Firearms Offense

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WASHINGTON—Emerson Winfield Begolly, 24, of New Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was sentenced today in Pittsburgh to 102 months in prison for soliciting others to engage in acts of terrorism within the United States and for using a firearm during and in relation to an assault on FBI agents.

In addition, he was sentenced to serve five years' supervised release. Begolly pleaded guilty August 9, 2011, to charges filed in the Eastern District of Virginia and the Western District of Pennsylvania.

The sentence was announced by David J. Hickton, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Pennsylvania; Neil H. MacBride, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia; John P. Carlin, Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security; Valerie Parlave, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office; and Gary Perdue, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI's Pittsburgh Division.

“Emerson Begolly used the Internet to solicit like-minded radical jihadists to commit atrocities and murder,” stated U.S. Attorney Hickton. “Through effective use of court-sanctioned investigative tools, mass tragedy was averted.”

“We now find ourselves in an era where one of the greatest innovations of the modern era—the Internet—is being utilized by radical jihadists who seek to use that medium to endanger American lives,” said U.S. Attorney MacBride. “Those like Mr. Begolly who solicit others to engage in acts of terrorism will be brought to justice and prosecuted to the fullest extent of law.”

“This case highlights the need for continued vigilance against homegrown extremism and use of the Internet to incite violence,” said Acting Assistant Attorney General Carlin. “I want to thank the agents, analysts, and prosecutors whose work resulted in today's sentence.”

“Today's sentence is the result of the effective coordination and enduring resolve of law enforcement to protect our citizens,” said Assistant Director Parlave. “Together with our partners, we will continue to work to combat the threat of violent homegrown extremism and keep our country safe.”

“The case against Mr. Begolly is an important reminder that online-inspired terrorism can occur anywhere, including Western Pennsylvania. Our efforts to detect and disrupt this threat are enduring,” said Special Agent in Charge Perdue. “The FBI, along with our law enforcement partners in the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, will continue to proactively employ all necessary resources in order to predict and prevent terrorist attacks from occurring and to ensure the ongoing safety of our communities.”

According to information presented by the government in court, Begolly was an active administrator on the Ansar al Mujahideen English Forum (AMEF), which is an internationally used Islamic extremist Internet forum. Using the pseudonym of Abu Nancy, Begolly systematically solicited jihadists to use firearms, explosives, and propane tanks against targets such as police stations, post offices, Jewish schools and daycare centers, military facilities, train lines, bridges, cell phone towers, and water plants.

In the summer of 2010, Begolly urged jihadists on the AMEF to “write their legacy in blood.” Begolly promised a special place in the afterlife for violent action in the name of Allah. Following the reported shootings in Northern Virginia at the Pentagon and the Marine Corps Museum in October 2010, Begolly posted a comment online that praised the shootings and hoped the shooter had followed his previous postings encouraging similar acts of violence. On December 28, 2010, Begolly further solicited his AMEF audience to violence by posting a manual on how to manufacture a bomb.

Days later, on January 4, 2011, FBI agents were assaulted by Begolly as they attempted to prevent him from reaching a loaded 9 mm semi-automatic handgun, which he had concealed on his body. While violently struggling with the agents, Begolly bit the agents on their fingers in an attempt to free himself to reach his firearm. His actions are consistent with a posting in which he urged his audience not to be taken alive by law enforcement, to always carry a loaded firearm, and to aggressively resist any law enforcement encounter including biting fingers if necessary.

These cases were investigated by the FBI Washington Field Office and the FBI Pittsburgh Field Office. Assistant U.S. Attorney Neil Hammerstrom of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Eastern District of Virginia’s National Security and International Crime Unit, Assistant U.S. Attorney James Kitchen of the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of Pennsylvania’s National Security and Cybercrime Section, and Trial Attorney Stephen Ponticiello of the Counterterrorism Section in the Justice Department’s National Security Division are prosecuting the cases.