

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, April 10, 2015

Topeka, Kansas, Man Charged in Plot to Explode Car Bomb at Military Base

Assistant Attorney General for National Security John P. Carlin, U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom of the District of Kansas and Special Agent in Charge Eric K. Jackson of the FBI's Kansas City Division announced that a Topeka, Kansas, man has been charged in federal court with attempting to detonate a vehicle bomb at Fort Riley military base near Manhattan, Kansas. The defendant was arrested as part of an FBI investigation, and the device used by the defendant was, in fact, inert.

John T. Booker Jr., 20, of Topeka, Kansas, was charged in a criminal complaint unsealed today with one count of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction (explosives), one count of attempting to damage property by means of an explosive and one count of attempting to provide material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), a designated foreign terrorist organization. Booker is expected to make an initial appearance this afternoon before U.S. District Judge Daniel Crabtree of the District of Kansas in federal court in Topeka.

Booker was arrested this morning near Manhattan, as he completed his final preparations to detonate a vehicle bomb targeting U.S. military personnel.

"As alleged in the complaint, John Booker attempted to attack U.S. military personnel on U.S. soil purportedly in the name of ISIL," said Assistant Attorney General Carlin. "Thanks to the efforts of the law enforcement community, we were able to safely disrupt this threat to the brave men and women who serve our country. Protecting American lives by identifying and bringing to justice those who wish to harm U.S. citizens remains the National Security Division's number one priority."

"We face a continued threat from individuals within our own borders who may be motivated by a variety of causes," said U.S. Attorney Grissom. "Anyone who seeks to harm this nation and its people will be brought to justice."

"I want to assure the public there was never any breach of Fort Riley Military Base, nor was the safety or the security of the base or its personnel ever at risk," said FBI Special Agent in Charge Jackson. "Recently the Command Staff at Fort Riley has been working hand in hand with law enforcement to ensure the utmost security and protection for the men and women who serve our country, and the surrounding community that supports the base."

Booker is alleged to have spent months discussing multiple plans before deciding on a plan that involved the execution of a suicide bombing mission.

The complaint alleges Booker told another person "that detonating a suicide bomb is his number one aspiration because he couldn't be captured, all evidence would be destroyed, and he would be guaranteed to hit his target." Booker identified Fort Riley as a good target, "because the post is famous and there are a lot of soldiers stationed there," the complaint alleges.

It is alleged that since March 2015, Booker plotted to construct an explosive device for an attack on American soil. It is alleged he repeatedly stated that he desired to engage in violent jihad on behalf of ISIL. Over a period of months, he took a series of actions to advance his plot. As alleged in the complaint, Booker assisted in acquiring components for a vehicle bomb, produced a propaganda video, rented a storage locker to store components for the explosive device, identified Fort Riley as the target and talked about his commitment to trigger the device himself and become a martyr.

FBI Evidence Response Teams are executing search warrants related to the case.

If convicted, Booker would face a maximum penalty of life in prison.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, including members from the FBI's Kansas City Division, the Topeka Police Department and the Kansas Highway Patrol.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys 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.

In all cases, defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. The charges merely contain allegations of criminal activity.