



The United States Department of Justice

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SOUTHERN COLORADO MAN CHARGED WITH FEDERAL HATE CRIME FOR PLOTTING TO BLOW UP SYNAGOGUE

Defendant Wanted To Carry Out an Act of Domestic Terrorism

WASHINGTON – Assistant Attorney General Eric Dreiband for the Civil Rights Division and Assistant Attorney General John C. Demers for the National Security Division, U.S. Attorney Jason R. Dunn for the District of Colorado, and Special Agent in Charge Dean Phillips for the FBI Denver Division announced today that a Colorado man has been charged with a federal hate crime for plotting to blow up the Temple Emanuel Synagogue in Pueblo, Colorado.

Richard Holzer, 27, of Pueblo, Colorado, was charged by criminal complaint with intentionally attempting to obstruct persons in the enjoyment of their free exercise of religious beliefs, through force and the attempted use of explosives and fire, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 247.

According to the affidavit in support of the criminal complaint, Holzer planned to destroy Temple Emanuel, a synagogue in Pueblo, Colorado, that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. After visiting Temple Emanuel and observing Jewish congregants, Holzer, who self-identifies as a skinhead and a white supremacist, told undercover FBI agents that he wanted to do something that would tell Jewish people in the community that they are not welcome in Pueblo, and they should leave or they will die. The affidavit states that during a meeting with the undercover agents, Holzer repeatedly expressed his hatred of Jewish people and his support for RAHOWA, shorthand for a racial holy war. Holzer went on to suggest using explosive devices to destroy the Synagogue and “get that place off the map.” The affidavit notes that Holzer’s actions meet the federal definition of domestic terrorism in that his actions involve criminal acts dangerous to human life that are intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population.

Holzer allegedly met with undercover agents posing as fellow white supremacists to discuss a plan to attack Temple Emanuel, then visited the Synagogue together. The affidavit alleges that Holzer then made additional trips on his own to inspect the Synagogue and coordinated with undercover agents to obtain explosives.

On the evening of Nov. 1, 2019, Holzer allegedly met with undercover agents, who provided Holzer with inert explosive devices that had been fabricated by the FBI, including two pipe bombs and 14 sticks of dynamite. According to the affidavit, Holzer planned to detonate the explosives several hours later, in the early hours of Saturday morning, Nov. 2, 2019.

Assistant United States Attorney Julia Martinez and Trial Attorney Michael J. Songer of the Civil Rights Division are prosecuting the case, with assistance from Counterterrorism Section Trial Attorney Erin Creegan of the Justice Department's National Security Division. The FBI conducted the investigation with the assistance of the Pueblo Police Department and Pueblo County Sheriff's Office.

Holzer is currently in federal custody. He faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison if convicted.

The charge in the complaint is merely an allegation and the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty in a court of law.

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