

PRESS RELEASE

East Longmeadow Man Sentenced for Placing Firebomb at Entrance of Jewish Nursing Home and Lying to FBI

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U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Massachusetts

<https://www.justice.gov/usao-ma/pr/east-longmeadow-man-sentenced-placing-firebomb-entrance-jewish-nursing-home-and-lying-fbi>

BOSTON – An East Longmeadow man was sentenced today in federal court in Springfield for placing a lit firebomb at the entrance of a Longmeadow senior health care facility on April 2, 2020, and for lying to the FBI about his whereabouts on that day.

John Rathbun, 37, was sentenced by U.S. District Court Judge Mark G. Mastroianni to five years in prison and three years of supervised release. As part of his supervised release, Judge Mastroianni ordered that Rathbun not enter the campus of the Longmeadow facility for any reason.

"Mr. Rathbun's hate-filled and ruthless actions put the entire Longmeadow community at risk," said United States Attorney Rachael S. Rollins. "Today's sentence sends a powerful message that hate and bigotry have no place in Massachusetts. Everyone deserves to live free of fear and authentically and fully as themselves. My office will continue to support and work alongside the Jewish community with our law enforcement partners to investigate any acts of violence rooted in bias or hate."

"There is no way to undo the damage John Rathbun did to the elderly residents of this Jewish assisted living facility, and to the entire community, with his hateful, repulsive, and violent behavior. But today's sentence does hold him accountable for placing a lit firebomb in their path and for lying to us about it," said Joseph R. Bonavolonta, Special Agent in Charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Boston Division. "Make no mistake, the FBI will use every investigative tool available, along with the expertise and skills of our partners on our Western Massachusetts Joint Terrorism Task Force to identify, assess, and disrupt threats like this one in order to keep our communities safe."

On June 15, 2021, Rathbun was convicted by a federal jury of one count of attempting to transport or receive explosive devices in interstate or foreign commerce with the knowledge or intent that the device will be used to kill, injure, or intimidate any individual or unlawfully to damage or destroy any building, vehicle or other real or personal property and one count of attempting to maliciously damage or destroy, by means of fire or an explosive, any building, vehicle, or other real or personal property used in interstate or foreign commerce.

On Nov. 13, 2020, Rathbun was convicted by another federal jury of lying to the FBI by claiming that he had not left his house on April 2, 2020.

On the morning of April 2, 2020, Rathbun assembled, placed, and lit a homemade firebomb at the driveway entrance of Jewish Geriatric Services Lifecare, Inc., a Jewish nursing home complex in Longmeadow. The device consisted of a five-gallon Scepter fuel canister filled with gasoline and a partially charred wick comprised of pages from a Christian religious pamphlet. Forensic analysis identified Rathbun's DNA on the canister and pamphlet.

On April 15, 2020, Rathbun falsely stated to a federal agent that he was at home on April 2, that he was not familiar with the location on Converse Street where the device was placed and that he had not possessed or even seen the fuel canister.

U.S. Attorney Rollins; Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division; and FBI SAC Bonavolonta made the announcement today. The investigation was led by the FBI's Western Massachusetts Joint Terrorism Task Force with valuable assistance also provided by the Longmeadow and East Longmeadow Police Departments and the Massachusetts State Police. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Neil L. Desroches and Steven H. Breslow of Rollins' Springfield Branch Office prosecuted the case, along with Justice Department's Civil Rights Division Trial Attorney Risa Berkower.

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