

U.S. white supremacist charged with synagogue bomb plot



Denver, November 5 (RHC)-- A self-described white supremacist in the U.S. state of Colorado has been arrested following an FBI sting operation and charged with plotting to detonate pipe bombs and dynamite at one of the state's oldest synagogues.

Officials in Colorado said that 27-year-old Richard Holzer was approached by undercover Federal Bureau of Investigation agents posing as white supremacists who gave him inert pipe bombs and dynamite. He discussed his plan to explode the devices at Temple Emanuel in Pueblo, Colorado, before dawn on Saturday, according to court documents.

Holzer, who is from Pueblo, was arrested and charged with attempting to obstruct religious exercise by force and faces a maximum sentence of 20 years in prison if convicted. "The allegation in the complaint constitutes domestic terrorism under federal law because it involves a criminal act dangerous to human life and was intended to coerce a civilian population," U.S. Attorney Jason Dunn told a news conference.

Hate crimes in the United States jumped by 17 percent and anti-Jewish attacks spiked 37 percent in 2017, the most recent year for which statistics are available, according to the FBI.

Holzer's arrest came just over a year after the worst attack on a Jewish community in the United States -- an October 27, 2018, mass shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue by a lone gunman who killed 11 people.

It was not immediately clear if Holzer had obtained an attorney, and the federal public defender's office for Colorado declined to comment. Following his arrest, Holzer waived his right to remain silent and admitted to planning to blow up Temple Emanuel synagogue, the court documents said.

Holzer had sent an unidentified Facebook user a message on July 11th saying he was "getting ready to cap people" and showing himself dressed in clothing with white supremacist symbols and holding firearms, including an assault rifle, according to the affidavit.

He later told the undercover agents he wanted to use explosives against Temple Emanuel, at first suggesting Molotov cocktails, to show Jewish people they were not welcome in his community and expressed support for a racial holy war, the court documents said.

Holzer on a number of occasions visited the synagogue in Pueblo, a city of 112,000 people that is about 100 miles (160 km) south of Denver, and at one point sent an undercover agent a video of himself walking around the exterior of the building.

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