

Case 33: Seattle

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On June 22, 2011 two men in Seattle were arrested after they took possession of an inoperable machine gun specially built for them by the FBI with which they planned to attack the local Military Entrance Processing Center.

The leader of the plot was the 33-year old Khalid Abdul-Latif, who had a lengthy criminal record, including at least two felony convictions.¹ He had a janitorial business, but any income from the enterprise was less than the expenses of running it, and he had declared bankruptcy a month earlier with assets of about \$3000 and liabilities of \$6000.²

He idolized Osama bin Laden,³ and the two men once used the password, "OBL," when arranging for some bus tickets.⁴ Abdul-Latif had come to believe that "it was time to take action, not just talk"⁵ and to "wake the Muslims up" about defending their religion.⁶ The attack would be in retaliation of crimes committed by US soldiers in Afghanistan.⁷ The only targets would be military personnel.⁸ His accomplice, aged 32, who does not appear to have a criminal record, said the idea was to prevent soldiers from going to Islamic lands and killing Muslims.⁹ The justice department press release on the case, however, simply says they were "driven by a violent, extreme ideology."¹⁰

The two men fantasized about the headlines they would create: "Three Muslim Males Walk into MEPS Building, Seattle, Washington, And Gun Down Everybody," and they speculated about the arrival of television crews.¹¹ "We're not only trying to kill people, we're sending a message," said Abdul-Latif. "We're trying to set something that's gonna be on CNN all over the world."¹²

The pair tried to recruit a third man a few weeks before the arrests. He, however, went to the authorities and then was paid to be a confidential informant.¹³ The informant has an "extremely serious" felony record.¹⁴

¹ William Yardley, "Officials Say Two Planned Armed Attack in Seattle," *New York Times*, June 23, 2011. Associated Press, "Suspect in Seattle terror plot intent on attacking a recruiting station to 'wake the Muslims up'," *oregonlive.com*, June 23, 2011.

² AP, "Suspect in Seattle."

³ Levi Pulkkinen, "Grand jury indicts two in South Seattle terror attack plot," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 7, 2011.

⁴ Ryan J. Reilly, "Feds: Terror Suspects Struggled To Afford Bullets, Worried They'd 'Look Like Fools'," *TPMMuckraker*, June 23, 2011.

⁵ Pulkkinen, "Grand jury indicts two."

⁶ AP, "Suspect in Seattle."

⁷ BBC, "Pair charged with plotting to attack US military target," June 23, 2011.

⁸ AP, "Suspect in Seattle."

⁹ AP, "Suspect in Seattle." "Arrests over 'plot to attack US army target'," *aljazeera.net*, June 24, 2011.

¹⁰ "Two Men Charged in Plot to Attack Seattle Military Processing Center," Office of Public Affairs, US Department of Justice, June 23, 2011.

¹¹ AP, "Suspect in Seattle."

¹² Yardley, "Officials Say Two Planned Armed Attack."

¹³ "Arrests over 'plot to attack US army target'."

The plans for the attack were not yet final. For one thing they didn't have any—or at any rate a sufficient number of—bullets. Having spent all his money for the gun, Abdul-Latiff was planning to save up to get more weaponry, and he was especially concerned about looking like a “fool” if he ran out of bullets:

Now we got the guns, we don't have to worry about that, that's done. And, we can spend another three or four hundred dollars on clips. So, if we get another, say, at least three grand, then we can buy two RPG's, and buy more clips, buy a few grenades, you know what I am saying? And then get the jackets [bulletproof vests], you know what I am saying? That should hold it down. 'Cause if I'm going down, I wanna last as long as I can, and take as many of them as I can. That's all I'm saying. I don't wanna be a fool and just—oh, I'm out [of ammunition]... We need as much as we can get, especially if we're going down.¹⁵

As this statement suggests, he expected to be killed in the attack.

When asked, a neighbor said of the case, “It's an absolute surprise. As they say in the media, he'd the last person I would have expected.”¹⁶

At their initial hearing, the men were asked if they lacked money to hire a lawyer. Both answered in the affirmative.¹⁷

This case has yet to be written.

¹⁴ Yardley, “Officials Say Two Planned Armed Attack.”

¹⁵ Reilly, “Feds: Terror Suspects Struggled.”

¹⁶ Yardley, “Officials Say Two Planned Armed Attack.”

¹⁷ Yardley, “Officials Say Two Planned Armed Attack.”