

36-Year-Old Man Charged With Attempted Arson at Jewish Nursing Home

A Massachusetts man accused of trying to set fire to a Jewish-sponsored assisted living center has been charged with attempted arson, the office of the U.S. Attorney for Massachusetts said Wednesday in a news release.

Officers found a full gas canister that had a Christian religious pamphlet burned out in the nozzle at the entrance of Ruth's House in Longmeadow on April 2. The officers found blood stains on the 5-gallon canister and pamphlet and traced the DNA back to John Michael Rathbun, according to a police affidavit.

Rathbun, 36, was arrested and charged in a criminal complaint in federal court in Springfield with two counts of attempted arson. He is scheduled for an initial court appearance through a videoconference. It isn't immediately clear whether Rathburn has a lawyer.

Ruth's House is a Jewish-sponsored assisted living center for seniors of all faiths, according to the release. It's located within 1 square mile of several other Jewish facilities, including three Jewish temples, a Jewish private school and a Jewish Community Center.

The attorney's office said the center was being discussed on white supremacist online platforms before the gas can was found.

"In times of national crisis, hatred based on religion often blossoms into violence," U.S. Attorney Andrew E. Lelling said in the release. "We will find, investigate and aggressively prosecute anyone engaged in this kind of mayhem." {eo}

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