

Boston Man Plotted to Decapitate Conservative Blogger, Police

Federal prosecutors on Tuesday said a Massachusetts man accused of plotting to attack police and behead a conservative blogger was a passionate supporter of the Islamic State militant group who recruited people including his own uncle into the scheme.

The prosecutors contend that David Wright, 28, along with his uncle and a friend had plotted to kill the blogger, a woman who organized a 2015 “Draw Mohammed” contest in Garland, Texas. They said the plan unraveled when the uncle, Usamaah Abdullah Rahim, lost patience and said he wanted to kill police officers instead.

“The defendant was a sophisticated recruiter, he manipulated people, including his own uncle, into believing that they needed to join ISIS and kill Americans,” said Assistant U.S. Attorney Stephanie Siegmann, using a common acronym to refer to Islamic State.

“The defendant was committed to ISIS and he knew exactly what he was doing,” Siegmann said in prosecutors’ closing statements at Wright’s trial in Boston federal court.

The three bought knives and planned to travel to New York to kill Pamela Geller, the organizer of the “Draw Mohammed” contest. That plan fell apart in June 2015 when Rahim told Wright he had lost patience and planned to attack police in Boston.

Law enforcement, who had been surveilling the group, overheard the conversation. When police approached Rahim to question him, he pulled a knife and was shot dead by officers.

Defense attorney Jessica Diane Hedges said that Rahim's actions were a surprise to Wright. The defendant took the rare step of testifying in his own defense, saying he had never really intended to attack Geller. He described his actions as "role playing."

Hedges noted that even law enforcement was surprised by Rahim's attack.

"They weren't planning on arresting Mr. Wright until Usamaah Rahim did something," she said. "What the government has done in this case over and over is exploit the fear that ISIS inspires."

If Wright is found guilty of the charge of conspiracy to commit acts of terrorism transcending national boundaries, he could face a life sentence.

Geller had organized the Texas event in May 2015 featuring cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, images that many Muslims consider blasphemous. Two gunmen had attacked that event and were shot dead by police.

Geller contends her event was intended as a demonstration of the free-speech rights protected by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. {eoa}

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