



Syrian Refugee Arrested On Allegations Of Planning Attack On Pittsburgh Church

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A Syrian man who is a refugee was arrested Wednesday on terrorism charges in connection with a plan to attack a church in Pittsburgh, according to authorities.

Mustafa Mousab Alowemer, 21, was arrested based on a federal complaint charging him with one count of attempting to provide material support and resources to the self-described Islamic State, also known as ISIS, according to the U.S. Justice Department. He's also charged with two counts of distributing information relating to an explosive, destructive device or weapon of mass destruction in relation to a plan to attack the Legacy International Worship Center on the city's north side.

The complaint states that Alowemer in May gave "multiple instructional documents" detailing how to build and use explosives, including improvised explosive devices, to an undercover FBI agent he believed was an ISIS supporter. Federal prosecutors allege that the man handed over these documents intending for them to be used in assembling a weapon to conduct an attack.

Alowemer allegedly bought several items earlier this month that could be used to build explosives, according to the complaint. Those alleged items include nails, batteries and consumer products that contain chemicals. Page 20 of the complaint details a June 11 meeting between Alowemer and an undercover FBI employee, where the agent seemed to have to guide the suspect on how to make a bomb in the first place.

Alowemer reportedly communicated with an undercover agent he believed to be a supporter of ISIS while planning the attack, stating his own support for the terror group and desire to be involved in the reported attack, according to the complaint.

Alowemer was born in Daraa, Syria, and was admitted to the U.S. as a refugee in August 2016, according to the complaint and the Department of Homeland Security, as stated in the Justice Department's release. He is expected to appear in court Friday.

According to the Cato Institute, there were 192 foreign-born terrorists who planned, attempted or carried out attacks in the U.S. between 1975 and 2017. Of those reported, 65% were Islamic extremists, 18% were foreign nationalists, 6% were right-wing extremists, 6% were non-Islamic religious extremists, 3% were left-wing extremists, and the remaining 2% were separatists or members of other ideologies.

In that same time period, there were 788 native-born terrorists who planned, attempted or carried out attacks in the country. Of those reported, 24% were right-wing extremists, 22% were white supremacists, 16% were left-wing ideologues, 14% were Islamic extremists, 11% were anti-abortion advocates, and 6% were members of other ideologies.

The chance of an American being murdered in a terrorist attack carried out by a refugee is about 1 in 3.86 billion per year, the institute's analysis stated.

In 2016, the United Nations expert on counterterrorism and human rights, Ben Emmerson, stressed that there is no evidence that migration leads to increased terrorist activity. In fact, he said in his report to the General Assembly, migration policies that are restrictive or violate fundamental human rights may create conditions conducive to terrorism.

Emmerson's report recommended the U.S. recognize that most of the people fleeing violence in Syria and other affected regions are themselves victims of terrorism.