



NJOHSP *at a glance*

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Militias: New York Defendant Discussed Attacking Government Buildings in Albany

A self-described “resistance fighter” who wanted to start a militia in Greene County, New York, allegedly discussed attacking government buildings in Albany, according to a federal prosecutor in the Northern District of New York State. Robert Twiss, age 58, of Earlton, New York (see photo), was charged last week with being a felon in unlawful possession of a firearm. The criminal complaint alleges that Twiss talked about using a Molotov cocktail against an FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) building in Albany and destroying a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) office in Albany, according to news media reports.



During an investigation that began last year, Twiss had numerous meetings with a confidential informant, during which he boasted about his ability to make an explosive device with a propane tank by adding the binary explosive Tannerite. He also bragged about his ability to obtain firearms, and he stated that if an “Armageddon situation” developed, he would go into Albany and “take up arms” against the “tyranny.” The weapons charges are related to an incident in September, in which Twiss showed the informant his Plainfield M-1 rifle and allowed the informant to fire it. The criminal complaint reportedly indicates that Twiss was previously a member of a militia group but has become disillusioned with his former organization, and was thus forming a new militia.

Union County: Body-Camera Video Shows Police Finding Alleged Seaside Park/Manhattan Bomber

Last week the Union County Prosecutor’s Office released body-camera video that shows Linden police officers finding Ahmad Khan Rahami, who has been charged with terrorism offenses for detonating bombs in Seaside Park (Ocean County) and Manhattan on September 17, as well as attempted murder of police officers. The video shows police approaching a bar while Rahami was sleeping in a hallway at the entrance (see photo, with Rahami in the lower-left corner). An officer said, “You can’t be sleeping on somebody’s door.” The officer left the patrol car and asked Rahami his name. Rahami gave a partial name—Ahmad Khan—and said he was homeless. He said he used to live in Perth Amboy, but he lost his job and couldn’t pay his rent. The video ends with the officer requesting assistance from available units. The released portion of the video ends before the segment showing the shootout that resulted in Rahami being wounded and taken into custody.



Offensive Against Raqqa Unlikely to Begin Anytime Soon

Although US military officials said last week that an offensive to retake Raqqa—the de facto capital of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), in north-central Syria—must begin “within weeks,” that projection appears to be overly optimistic, and a major assault on Raqqa does not appear to be imminent. In contrast to the offensive to retake Mosul—which is being conducted by a coalition of about 30,000 Iraqi troops from various factions—the US-led coalition does not have a large combat force available to attack Raqqa. The force currently available in Syria is much smaller, consisting of a few hundred Sunni Arab fighters and several thousand Syrian Kurds. That is not likely to be an adequate combat force to retake Raqqa, so this offensive appears to be more than a few weeks away.

As reported last week in NJOHSP’s “Daily Headlines,” US military officials expressed a sense of urgency about the assault on Raqqa because of the planning that is believed to be under way there to conduct terrorist attacks in the West. Army Lieutenant General Stephen Townsend, the commanding general of the US-led coalition, said operations to isolate Raqqa must begin soon to prevent attacks against the West that could be launched or planned from the city.

Contact Information

Any agency with information or comments/questions on this or other analytical products, please contact the NJOHSP Analysis Bureau at analysis@njohsp.gov or 609-584-4000.

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