

Man planned Christmas attack on San Francisco's Pier 39, was inspired by Islamic State, FBI says

Several months ago, the FBI became interested in the Facebook account of Everitt Aaron Jameson, a 26-year-old Modesto tow truck driver and former Marine.

Acting on tips from an informant, authorities said they saw that Jameson liked and loved pro-Islamic State and pro-terrorism Facebook posts. In the coming weeks, the FBI alleged, Jameson would plot a Christmas suicide terror attack on San Francisco's Pier 39, a popular tourist destination.

"He had been there before and knew that it was a heavily crowded area," an FBI affidavit filed Friday said. "Jameson explained that he also desired to use explosives, and described a plan in which explosives could 'tunnel' or 'funnel' people into a location where Jameson could inflict casualties."

Authorities announced terrorism charges against Jameson Friday. His plot comes as Islamic State has called for attacks on Western cities around the Christmas holidays.

The arrest of Jameson highlights a larger concern about the radicalization of U.S. residents by terrorist groups. Jameson's alleged plot comes just weeks after terrorist attacks in New York City.

Authorities alleged in court documents that Jameson told an undercover FBI employee he believed to be a senior Islamic State leader that Pier 39 would be an ideal location for a terrorist attack because it is often crowded with tourists. On Monday, he sent the undercover employee a map and photos of the site, authorities said.

Jameson allegedly sought from the undercover employee an assault rifle, ammunition, powder, tubing, nails, timers and remote detonators — materials that can be made into a pipe bomb. According to the FBI, he said he "did not need an escape plan because he was ready to die." He also said he was trained in both

the M-16 and AK-47 rifle, the court filing said.

The suspect allegedly told the undercover employee that “we need something along the lines of New York or San Bernardino,” apparently referring to the Halloween attack in Manhattan when a man crashed a rented pickup truck into cyclists and runners, which killed eight people, and the shooting-related terrorist attack in Southern California in 2015 that left 14 people fatally shot.

FBI agents conducted a search warrant on Wednesday at the suspect’s Modesto home and found a note signed by Abdallah abu Everitt ibn Gordon al-Amriki, dated Dec. 16, which in part said, “I Abdallah [abu] Everitt ibn Gordon have committed these acts upon the Kuffar [non-Muslims], in the name of Dar al Islam [the Muslim world], Allahu Akbar!”

“You’ve Allowed Donald J Trump to give away Al Quds [Jerusalem] to the Jews. Both You and he are wrong, it belongs to the Muslemeen [Muslims],” the letter allegedly said. “Long Live Isil, Long Live Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.”

The FBI also seized firearms and ammunition from the home.

Jameson completed basic U.S. Marine Corps recruit training in 2009 and earned a sharpshooter rifle qualification, according to the affidavit. He was discharged for failing to disclose a history of asthma.

Jameson came to the attention of the FBI in late September, when a person described as a credible source told the FBI of a suspicious Facebook account whose author published posts supportive of terrorism. Among the posts he liked or loved on Facebook in recent months was an image of Santa Claus standing in New York with dynamite, with a caption saying, “ISIS post image of Santa with dynamite threatening attack on New York.”

By late October, Jameson allegedly messaged the source that “I am here to beg to join the cause against darul kuffar,” or the non-Muslim world. He said he became a Muslim two years ago in Merced and said: “That is what will make me more useful. I can blend in.”

On Saturday, Jameson met with the undercover FBI employee, who purported to report to Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, a claim that appeared to please him, the affidavit said. Jameson said he was an infantryman and well-

versed in a book that discusses the building of improvised explosives, the court document said.

The undercover employee told Jameson to not do anything without his knowledge, adding he needed to get approval from his superiors.

Late Monday night, Jameson told the undercover employee that "I ... don't think I can do this after all. I've reconsidered."

After securing a warrant, the FBI conducted a search of Jameson's home Wednesday. Jameson "discussed aspects of the plan to carry out an attack, noting he would be happy if an attack was carried out," the affidavit said.

In Modesto Friday, Jameson's father, Gordon Jameson, told KFSN-TV that he was shocked by the charges. He said he sometimes talked to his son about religion and Everitt's conversion to the Islamic faith but that he never spoke of violence. "Unreal. I really couldn't believe it," he told the station. "I am kind of lost right now. That is not how he was raised."

The arrest comes at a time of heightened concern about terrorism on American soil.

Earlier this month, Akayed Ullah, a 27-year-old legal permanent resident from Bangladesh, was charged with detonating a pipe bomb in the New York transit system, injuring himself and four others. Authorities said he was radicalized through internet propaganda, and allegedly said, "I did it for Islamic State."

Authorities said the deadly Halloween terrorist attack in Manhattan was committed by Sayfullo Saipov, 29, a trucker and Uber driver who legally came to the U.S. from Uzbekistan in 2010. Officials said he became radicalized by watching Islamic State videos on his cellphone.

FBI spokeswoman Katherine Zackel said there is no specific and credible threat to the Bay Area at this time.

Jameson was charged with attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization. If convicted, he could face up to 20 years in prison.

San Francisco acting Mayor London Breed said police will be increasing their presence throughout the city as the FBI investigation continues.

Source: <http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-terror-attack-plot-san-francisco-20171222-story.html>

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