



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

April 3, 2003

ROBERT GOLDSTEIN ENTERS GUILTY PLEA

United States Attorney for the Middle District of Florida Paul I. Perez and Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Ralph F. Boyd, Jr. announced today that Robert Jay Goldstein entered a guilty plea to a three count information charging him with conspiracy to violate civil rights, attempting to damage religious property and obstruction of persons in the free exercise of religious beliefs, and possession of firearms not registered to him.

The conspiracy count carries a sentence of no more than ten years' imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and a term of supervised release of three years. The attempt count carries a sentence of no more than twenty years' imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and a term of supervised release of three years. The firearms possession count carries a sentence of no more than ten years' imprisonment, a \$250,000 fine, and a term of supervised release of three years. Under the terms of the plea agreement, the United States reserved its right to seek a fifteen year term of imprisonment - the most severe penalty allowed under the projected sentencing guidelines calculation.

U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez stated, "This deplorable plot was foiled and the persons responsible were arrested because local, state and federal law enforcement timely shared sensitive information and worked hand-in-hand in the investigation. Today's guilty plea reflects what can be accomplished when law enforcement agencies work together to protect our community."

Following the September 11th terrorist attacks, Goldstein told his friend, Michael Hardee, that he wanted to retaliate against Arab and Muslim people for both the events of September 11th, as well as ongoing hostilities in the Middle East. During the spring of 2002, Goldstein devised a plan to detonate an explosive device, or devices, at the Islamic Society of Pinellas County - an Islamic Education and Cultural Center in Seminole, Florida. Goldstein's and Hardee's goal in bombing the Islamic Center was to damage the religious and cultural building used by Arabs and Muslims. Hardee agreed to participate in the bombing by driving Goldstein to the Islamic Center where Goldstein would set and detonate the bomb.

On the evening of August 22, 2002, Pinellas County Sheriff's deputies responded to a domestic disturbance call at the Goldstein residence located at 9202 Seminole Boulevard, Apartment #112, Seminole, Florida. The deputies conducted a protective sweep of the apartment and found numerous explosive devices and a number of firearms. The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) and the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office Bomb Squad responded to the scene to secure the explosives and weapons. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) also assisted in the investigation.

As a result of the investigation, two of Goldstein's accomplices earlier entered guilty pleas. On February 26, 2003, Goldstein's wife, Kristi Goldstein, entered a guilty plea on

charges of possession of explosive devices not registered to her. Her sentencing date is June 13, 2003 at 9:00 a.m. before U.S. District Court Judge James S. Moody. She faces a maximum sentence of 10 years' imprisonment. Michael Hardee, of Tampa, Florida, pled guilty to a four count information on October 18, 2002. The complaint charged him with conspiracy to maliciously damage or destroy building by means of fire or explosion (up to 20 years' imprisonment), conspiracy to violate civil rights (up to 10 years' imprisonment), possession of a short barrel rifle not registered to the defendant (up to 10 years' imprisonment), and possession of a silencer not registered to the defendant (up to 10 years' imprisonment). Hardee is scheduled to be sentenced on May 1, 2003 at 11:00 a.m. before U.S. District Court Judge Elizabeth A. Kovachevich.

"Today's guilty plea is a reminder that acts of violence targeted at individuals because of their race, religion, or national origin will not be permitted in the United States - they will be aggressively investigated, swiftly prosecuted and firmly punished," said Ralph F. Boyd, Jr., Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. "The Department of Justice is committed to fighting hate and intolerance, as they tear at the very fabric of our great nation."

This case was jointly investigated by the U.S. Attorney's Office, ATF, FBI, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office and Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). This case is being jointly prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Colleen Murphy-Davis and Department of Justice Civil Rights Attorney Christopher Santoro.

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