



UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
Eastern District of Virginia

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Alexandria Man Charged with Shooting at Military Buildings in Northern Virginia

ALEXANDRIA, Va. – Yonathan Melaku, 22, of Alexandria, Va., has been charged with destruction of property and firearm violations involving five separate shootings at military installations in Northern Virginia between October and November 2010.

Neil H. MacBride, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and James W. McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office, made the announcement.

If convicted, Melaku faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison on each of the two willfully injuring the property of the United States charges and a total mandatory minimum of 35 years and a maximum of life in prison if he is convicted of both use of a firearm during a crime of violence charges.

“Today’s charges allege a long-term pattern of violent behavior against the U.S. military that escalated until his detention last Friday,” said **U.S. Attorney MacBride**. “The affidavit states that what began as a drive-by shooting at the National Museum of the Marine Corps grew to a series of armed attacks targeting multiple military installations seeking to shut them down. It culminated with Mr. Melaku’s apprehension near the Pentagon in possession of a backpack containing ammonium nitrate, one of the components used in the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.”

“Great investigative and intelligence analysis on this case has brought us to where we are today,” said **James McJunkin, Assistant Director in Charge of the FBI's Washington Field Office**. “The permanent partnership shared in the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force has allowed investigators to follow up on every lead and continue to pursue so many matters in this case, leaving no stone unturned. This was an eight-month investigation involving hundreds of hours of interviews, evidence collection and analysis by investigators from Prince William County Police, Virginia State Police, Pentagon Force Protection Agency, Fairfax and Arlington Police, the

Naval Criminal Investigative Service, U.S. Park Police and the United States Marine Corps. This is a shining example of how together we work tirelessly to keep Northern Virginia residents safe.”

According to an affidavit filed in court, Melaku is accused of engaging in a series of five shootings from Oct. 17, 2010, through Nov. 2, 2010, at the following locations: the National Museum of the Marine Corps (twice), the Pentagon, a Marine Corps recruiting sub-station in Chantilly, Va., and a U.S. Coast Guard recruiting office in Woodbridge, Va. Each shooting allegedly took place late at night or early in the morning and involved multiple 9mm rounds fired at each building. The cost for repairs at the facilities exceeded \$100,000.

The affidavit states that Mr. Melaku attempted to flee law enforcement after he was spotted on the property of Ft. Myer in Arlington, Va., at approximately 1:30 a.m. on June 17, 2011. During the pursuit, he dropped a backpack that allegedly contained numerous spent 9mm shell casings; four bags containing ammonium nitrate, and a spiral notebook with numerous Arabic statements referencing the Taliban, al Qaeda, Osama bin Laden, “The Path to Jihad,” as well as a list of several other individuals associated with foreign terrorist organizations.

Later on June 17, 2011, the affidavit states, law enforcement recovered a typed list in Melaku’s bedroom closet titled “Timer” that included nine items that are consistent with the requirements for a time power unit and firing mechanism of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). Combined with ammonium nitrate, these items would make up several significant components needed for an IED.

The affidavit alleges that law enforcement also found a videotape in Melaku’s bedroom that shows Melaku in an automobile driving near what appears to be the U.S. Marine Corps Heritage Museum and repeatedly firing a handgun out the passenger-side window. Melaku allegedly made numerous statements on the video, including “That’s my target. That’s the military building. It’s going to be attacked” and at the conclusion of multiple shots exclaiming “Allahu Akbar.”

According to the affidavit, an analysis of the shootings determined that a brand of ammunition, based on class characteristics consistent with bullets loaded into cartridges, were manufactured by Prvi Partizan, and some of the shell casings allegedly found in Melaku’s backpack when he was taken into custody were also Prvi Partizan. The affidavit states that the bullets and fragments recovered from all five shooting incidents were fired from the same firearm.

The United States Marine Corps reports that Melaku joined the Marine Corps Reserve on Sept. 4, 2007, and is currently listed as a Marine Corps reservist Lance Cpl and a motor vehicle operator with Combat Engineer Support Company, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, 4th Marine Division, Marine Forces Reserve. He has previously been awarded the National Defense Service Medal and the Selected Marine Corps Reserve Medal. He has not deployed overseas.

The investigation was conducted by the FBI Washington Field Office’s Joint Terrorism Task Force, including the police departments of Arlington County, Fairfax County and Prince

William County; the Pentagon Force Protection Agency; the Virginia State Police; the Naval Criminal Investigative Service; the Coast Guard Investigative Service; the U.S. Park Police; U.S. Marine Corps Base Quantico; and the Military District of Washington Provost Marshal Office. Assistant United States Attorneys Daniel Grooms, Neil Hammerstrom, and Lynn Haaland of the National Security and International Crime Unit are prosecuting the case on behalf of the United States.

Criminal complaints are only charges and not evidence of guilt. A defendant is presumed to be innocent until and unless proven guilty.

A copy of this press release may be found on the website of the United States Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.justice.gov/usao/vae>. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia at <http://www.vaed.uscourts.gov> or on <https://pcl.uscourts.gov>.

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