



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on January 10, 2016

Court Hearing Provides New Testimony in Okla. Beheading Case

Cleveland County, Oklahoma, Judge Steve Stice ruled Friday that prosecutors had produced enough evidence to justify putting Alton Alexander Nolen (shown) on trial for the beheading of a woman in Moore, Oklahoma, in September of 2014.

Nolen is charged with murdering Colleen Hufford, a fellow employee at the Vaughn Foods processing plant in Moore, Oklahoma.

“I’m not your friend,” wrote Nolen on his Facebook page, using the name Jah’Keem Yisrael. My friends are at the mosque all around the world,” Employees at the Vaughn Foods plant would certainly agree with that, after 30-year-old Nolen used a knife to decapitate Hufford.



Apparently inspired by recent beheadings of Americans and other Westerners in the Middle East, Nolen reacted to his firing by beheading Hufford. While such barbarism is shocking, it is no longer surprising in places such as Iraq and Syria.

But this occurred in the Oklahoma City suburb of Moore, which has made national news in the past — for tornadoes, not terrorism.

At the preliminary hearing, testimony described Nolen as “on a mission.” Three men attempted to stop his murder of Hufford, before Vaughn’s chief operation officer, Mark Vaughn, prevented a second killing with several shots from a rifle.

Nolen was taken to OU Medical Center in nearby Oklahoma City, where he was treated for gunshot wounds.

According to testimony at Friday’s hearing, Hufford was grabbed from behind, thrown to the floor, and cut deeply and repeatedly by a large butcher knife.

Finally, Nolen used the knife to saw off her head.

Gary Hazelrigg, customer service manager at Vaughn Foods, testified that Hufford came into his office to give him some paperwork. The attacker, whom he identified as Nolen, threw Hufford down on the floor. Hazelrigg tried to pull Nolen off her.

“Sadly, to no avail,” he told Judge Stice.

Another employee, Mark Vanderpool, the plant’s director of operations, kicked Nolen in the face, but it did not stop the brutal assault. Hazelrigg told Judge Stice that he called 911 after Nolen became distracted and ran out of the room. But Nolen then returned and resumed his attack. When Hazelrigg again tried to pull Nolen off Hufford, Nolen attacked him with the knife. Using a chair, Hazelrigg was



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able to fend Nolen off and lock himself in an office with other employees until the police arrived.

Warehouse employee Bryan Aylor had left for the day, but Nolen passed him going back into the plant. Very soon, some employees ran out screaming, "He cut her throat!"

Reentering the plant, Aylor saw Nolen sawing on Hufford's neck with the knife.

Aylor told the judge that he grabbed Nolen's arm, but was knocked to the floor. Nolen then tried to stab him in the chest, "at least a dozen times." Aylor said he had hold of Nolen's arm, keeping his assailant from actually stabbing him.

For some reason that Aylor could not explain, Nolen then ran off. Vanderpool testified that when he returned from finding Mark Vaughn, he saw Nolen at the end of a hallway, stabbing Traci Johnson, another employee, in the neck.

Vaughn, holding a rifle, yelled at Nolen to "get off her." Nolen then proceeded to charge Vaughn, but after Vaughn fired multiple shots, Nolen finally fell against a wall and slid to the floor, still holding the knife.

In a court affidavit, police say that Nolen "openly admitted" he beheaded Hufford and attempted to do the same to Johnson. He has announced that he desires the death penalty, citing his religious beliefs that his actions were not criminal.

"I'm a Muslim. I'm not scared to die," Nolen told one psychologist. Nolen's court-appointed attorneys, however, are attempting to persuade him to plead not guilty.

While Hufford does not appear to have had any interaction with Nolen, the second person he attacked, Traci Johnson, had reported him for making racial remarks.

Other witnesses told police that Nolen had become "increasingly violent" at work, demanding to be called "Muhammad."

Nolen is a recent convert to Islam. He was working at the plant while finishing a prison sentence in a halfway house, and tried repeatedly to convert his fellow workers to Islam. He was convicted in 2011 of multiple felony drug offenses, and assault and battery on a police officer.

Oddly, Nolen had "Jesus Christ" tattooed on his chest, and "Judah" on his left arm. On his Facebook page, he appeared to challenge the words of the Apostle Paul found in I Thessalonians 4:16-17, which described the resurrection of the "dead in Christ," and the catching up of living Christians to "meet the Lord in the air." Nolen retorted on the post that those who "will rise from the dead" will be those who died in faith as "servants of Allah." He argued that "the ones who died in sin will remain in their graves" because they are already in Hell.

On July 24, 2014, Nolen posted a message — along with a picture of the Batman villain, the Joker — that America should help Gaza against Israel. "I upload this pik because America and Israel are wicked. Wake up Muslims!!" he stated. The next month, he posted a photograph of himself with two "brothers" from Morocco at the mosque in Oklahoma City.

Perhaps the tragic episode in Moore is instructive on what citizens should do to protect themselves from terrorism.

"We had officers on the scene very quick," Sergeant Lewis of the Moore police department said. "The attack, it didn't go on a long time. I do know that in our response, we were there within minutes of the initial call." But while the police are to be commended for their quick response, it is a fact that many



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times, crime victims need help immediately — help that can be provided only by themselves or others already at the scene or close by when the crime is being committed.

Had Vaughn not had his rifle at the plant, at least one more person would have died, and perhaps more. Vaughn fired multiple times before he stopped the perpetrator. This answers the question from anti-gun fanatics as to why a private citizen needs a firearm that can fire multiple shots. What if there had been multiple assailants? One firearm with only six shots is unlikely to stop three or four attackers.

“This was not going to stop if he [Vaughn] didn’t stop it,” Sgt. Lewis noted. “He [Vaughn] is obviously a hero in this situation. It’s very tragic that someone did lose their life, but it could have gotten a lot worse. This guy was definitely not going to stop. He didn’t stop until he was shot.”

Had Vaughn’s constitutionally protected right to keep and bear arms been denied, as has happened in nations such as Australia and Great Britain, not only would Nolen’s murderous rampage have continued, but perhaps Vaughn himself would have faced decapitation.

The right of a citizen such as Vaughn to keep and bear arms will not stop all acts of violence, but it will make citizens safer and reduce the loss of innocent life, regardless of the motivation of the perpetrators. In the case of the Moore incident, the exercise of this right did stop Nolen; it did save at least one life and possibly many more. And it will do much more of the same in the future.

The police responded within minutes, but help was needed within seconds, and Vaughn provided that help.

Photo of Alton Alexander Nolen: AP Images

Steve Byas is a professor of history at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College in Moore, Oklahoma. His book, History’s Greatest Libels, is a challenge to some of the greatest lies of history told about some of history’s greatest heroes, such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Christopher Columbus, and Joseph McCarthy.



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