



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on July 3, 2018

FBI “Busts” July 4 Terrorist Plot It Helped Create

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) arrested and charged a man with plotting to detonate a bomb during Cleveland’s Independence Day fireworks, but the case looks suspiciously like [many others](#) in which the agency has “busted” a terrorist plot of its own making.



Demetrius Pitts, 48, was charged Monday with “knowingly attempt[ing] to provide material support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization,” according to the FBI’s [criminal complaint](#).

That “foreign terrorist organization,” however, consisted of an undercover FBI agent posing as an al-Qaeda representative, who, the complaint shows, led Pitts through every step of his alleged terrorist plot. Indeed, as [NBC News](#) acknowledged, “There’s no indication that Pitts could have carried off any attack on his own.” He even had to ask the agent for a bus pass and a cellphone.

There is no question that Pitts, who considers himself a Muslim, is a bad guy. According to WKYC, Pitts “has an extensive criminal history.” He had posted on Facebook that he wanted to join al-Qaeda and stage an attack on the United States and e-mailed a California-based television news program with similar sentiments in 2015. In July 2017, Pitts “stated he would have no remorse if he killed in the name of religion,” wrote the FBI.

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The FBI began monitoring Pitts’ Facebook account, which was under the name Abdur Raheem Rahfeeq, when he lived in southern Ohio, and continued to do so after he moved to Cleveland. The agency then sent its undercover agent to meet with Pitts and secretly record their conversations.

The partial transcripts of those conversations included in the complaint suggest that Pitts, while clearly filled with bitterness toward America, its president, and its military, had no real plans to launch any terrorist attacks, much less the means to do so. His remarks on how to dispose of a dead body, for instance, are hardly those of a criminal mastermind: He suggested chopping up the body (or not) and feeding it to “hogs” or, in the South, “gators.”

The transcript of the agent’s June 22 meeting with Pitts shows just how much the agent drove the alleged plot. The agent is the one who brought up “what we talked about last time,” namely “finding places where we could get in and set up a bomb,” actions that the agent hinted would get Pitts a face-to-face meeting with a higher-up member of al-Qaeda. The agent suggested doing something “from within,” like Nidal Hassan’s attack on Fort Hood. Even Pitts was able to put two and two together and come up with the Fourth of July as a perfect time to stage this supposed bombing.

“What would hit them in the core?” he asked. “Blow up in the, have a bomb to blow up at the Fourth of July parade.”

Then, upon realizing he was likely to get caught because of all the cameras, he hit upon the idea of putting explosives in remote-controlled toy cars so those carrying out the attack wouldn’t be seen. He



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later switched to a nighttime attack by a bomb-laden van. In addition, he said he wanted to witness the carnage in person.

Pitts conducted reconnaissance of downtown Cleveland using a bus pass and cellphone provided by his FBI contact. "His passcode for the phone," noted NBC, "wasn't exactly a stumper: 0704, the date of the supposed attack." He also offered to do the same for a proposed Labor Day attack in Philadelphia, but he made it clear he wanted no part of the actual bombings.

"The only thing I'm gonna be responsible for is going to look at the spot, to scope out the scenery," he said.

Pitts was arrested during a July 1 meeting with the undercover agent. The FBI trumpeted his arrest as a great victory in the war on terrorism, and Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson praised the agency's efforts.

But the significance of Pitts' arrest appears to be somewhat less than advertised. Like so many other alleged terrorists the FBI has nabbed since 2001, Pitts was an angry man with some vague dreams of carrying out terrorist attacks, but without the prodding and assistance of the FBI, he probably would never have acted on them.



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