

FBI arrests mentally ill Rochester man in fabricated ISIS plot

Josh Varlin
9 January 2016

The Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Joint Terrorism Task Force arrested 25-year-old Emanuel Lutchman on December 30, claiming the existence of a New Year's Eve plot to attack partiers in a bar in Rochester, New York.

Lutchman was charged with “[a]ttempt to provide material support ... to a designated foreign terrorist organization, namely, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL),” also known as the Islamic State or ISIS. The charge carries a sentence of up to 20 years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

He allegedly prepared to kidnap and kill New Year's revelers in a plot instigated by three confidential informants working for the FBI. Because of Lutchman's complete lack of funds—according to the *Democrat & Chronicle*, he was “known for his aggressive panhandling”—one of the paid informants purchased the \$40 of supplies, including knives and zip ties.

Lutchman apparently converted to Islam in prison after being sentenced to five years imprisonment for a robbery he committed in 2006 at the age of 16.

The alleged plot has all the hallmarks of an FBI-concocted scheme, including a vulnerable victim and extensive involvement by federal agents. Lutchman has a history of mental illness, as documented in the official affidavit, including “previous state Mental Hygiene arrests.” His father, Omar Lutchman, told NBC New York, “He has mental issues and he's been having mental issues for a long time.”

“This thing could have been avoided and it could have been handled better if he'd had the right help,” the elder Lutchman noted. His son has attempted suicide in the past, including over the past summer. Emanuel's grandmother, Beverley Carridice, told NBC News that he was prescribed psychiatric drugs but was

inconsistent in taking his medication.

Carridice, who raised Lutchman from age 2 to 13, noted that he was psychologically vulnerable and unlikely to commit an attack without government involvement: “Whatever went down, the family is sorry. We do not support radical Islam. ... But, they sent this guy to befriend him and set him up in a sting. How is that right? For the federal government to set up youths that they know are vulnerable?”

Charma Lutchman, Emanuel Lutchman's former stepmother, told the *Democrat & Chronicle* that Emanuel had been hit by a car while living with Carridice, an event which permanently changed the youth and caused him to be more withdrawn.

“He wasn't the same boy I knew after he got hit by a car,” she said. “He was different, more quiet.”

In addition to Lutchman's psychological vulnerability, the FBI informant known as CS-2 played a main role in the financing and organization of the plot. (“CS” stands for “confidential source,” or a paid informant.) Omar Lutchman claims that the alleged plot would not have taken form without federal involvement, saying, “We just believe that he was influenced.”

Three FBI informants pressured Emanuel Lutchman at every turn. When one of the informants, CS-3, pulled out of the operation on December 29 at the FBI's request, Lutchman texted CS-2, “In a way I was thinking about stopping the operation cuz [sic] I was trusting [CS-3] and at the last of our moment [sic] he decided to pull out.” According the affidavit CS-2 encouraged Lutchman, telling him “not to let CS-3's backing out of the operation upset him.”

Lutchman is alleged to have had contact with an individual overseas who claimed to be an ISIS member in Syria. The affidavit does not claim that this

individual gave any specific orders to Lutchman, nor does it identify this individual, their allegiance or specific location, leaving the possibility open that they are also involved with American intelligence.

The credibility of the supposed plot is further undermined by the fact that Lutchman's communications with this unidentified individual began between December 25 and 26—in other words, about five days before his arrest. As *Democrat & Chronicle* columnist David Andreatta notes, “When was the last time ISIL hatched a terror plot in five days with \$40?”

This case has several parallels with an earlier case in Rochester last year, in which Mufid Elfgeeh, a 30-year-old food store owner, was also charged with giving “material support” to ISIS for attempting to send two informants to Syria. The FBI apparently even used at least one of the same informants, CS-2, in both cases.

A comparison published by the *Democrat & Chronicle* points out the similarities in the affidavits in the Lutchman and Elfgeeh cases. CS-2, identified as such in both documents, played a key role in planning the alleged crimes.

CS-2, like the other informants in this case, was compensated well; he had received at least \$7,000 from the FBI before this investigation, and will likely receive thousands more for ensnaring Lutchman in the latest plot.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has reported extensively on numerous concocted terror plots over the last fifteen years, many of which constitute entrapment. Some of the most brazen federal orchestrations include the Newburgh Four case in 2009 and the so-called “JFK plot” in 2007.

A report published by Human Rights Watch and Columbia Law School's Human Rights Institute noted that “in some cases the Federal Bureau of Investigation may have created terrorists out of law-abiding individuals by conducting sting operations that facilitated or invented the target's willingness to act.”

The report also indicates the difficulty US law places on proving entrapment occurred, and that American law regarding entrapment is not up to the standards of European human rights law.

Authorities at the state and federal level are hailing Lutchman's arrest as a stunning victory that made Americans safer, despite the dubiousness of the planned attack. Governor Andrew Cuomo told Time Warner

Cable News, “The federal agencies have done a magnificent job.”

US Attorney for Western New York William Hochul Jr. took the opportunity to gloat: “This New Year's Eve prosecution underscores the threat of ISIL even in upstate New York but demonstrates our determination to immediately stop any who would cause harm in its name. What began as an ISIL directive to harm the community ended with the arrest of this defendant and a message for other individuals considering similar behavior—you will be caught, you will be prosecuted, and you will be punished.”

Even though the police had no knowledge of any remaining specific threats in the city, Rochester canceled its annual New Year's Eve fireworks display.

The plot, trumpeted across media in upstate New York in particular, has already been used to retroactively justify an unprecedented police buildup across the country on New Year's Eve. It will no doubt also be used to reinforce a climate of fear and justify police-state measures domestically and imperialist barbarism internationally.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact