

Mentally ill man arraigned for shooting Philadelphia police officer

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Yesterday Edward Archer of Yeadon, Pennsylvania, was charged with attempted murder in the shooting of Philadelphia police officer Jesse Hartnett on Thursday in a West Philadelphia neighborhood.

Video camera footage shows Archer firing a weapon as he runs at police car in which Hartnett is sitting, then leaning into the window of the car and running from the car as he fires his weapon again. Archer was wearing a dishdasha, a long robe often worn by Muslim men. After Archer ran away, Officer Harnett got out of his car and fired his own weapon.

Police say that Archer fired 13 shots, three of which hit Hartnett, who is in stable condition in an area hospital. Archer was also hit by return gun fire from Hartnett.

According to police detectives, Archer confessed to acting in the name of Islam and said that he had pledged allegiance to Islamic State (ISIS), the right-wing fundamentalist movement in Iraq and Syria, and that police actions were contrary to the Koran, the primary Islamic religious text.

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* spoke to Valerie Holliday, Archer's mother, who said that her son has been a Muslim for some time. She said that he had suffered head injuries from playing football and from a moped accident. "He's been acting kind of strange lately. He's been talking to himself. .. laughing and mumbling. He's been hearing voices in his head. We asked him to get medical help," she said.

Natalie King, who lives across the street from Archer's residence, was quoted in the media as saying that she considered mental illness a more likely explanation for the shooting than religious extremism. "He wasn't what you would call radicalized or nothing like that," she said.

The FBI has begun to investigate the possibility that

the attack was an act of terrorism. Agents have taken materials from Archer's house and begun an investigation into his Internet communications. The FBI is also assessing recent trips Archer made to the Middle East, including a pilgrimage in 2011 to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, known as a Hajj, required of all devout Muslims" and a 10-month stay in Egypt in 2012.

Despite the fact that Archer's mental condition became public knowledge soon after the alleged crime, elements of the political establishment and the media have leapt into action to whip up anti-Muslim hysteria and to associate Archer's actions with ISIS.

Democratic Senator Robert Casey of Pennsylvania said that the shooting was "an act of barbarism ... Those who carry out attacks in the name of ISIS or any other terrorist organization must be fully prosecuted."

Republican Presidential candidate Marco Rubio sought to inculcate a climate of fear by adding on Saturday: "This is a radical person, living in United States, who became radicalized. This is the new face of the war on terror, and it is dangerous and we need to confront it and defeat it."

Attempts are also being made to compare the Philadelphia shooting with the murder of 14 people by Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik in San Bernardino, California last month.

Yesterday, Philadelphia police claimed they have received a tip that the "the threat is not over" and further attacks on police officers may follow. The tipster, police say, claimed that Archer was a part of a group of four in Philadelphia, and not the most radical within it. Officers will temporarily work in pairs until the threat has been assessed.



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