

FBI arrests US soldier with far-right ties

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A US Army specialist assigned to the First Infantry Division in Fort Riley, Kansas was arrested on Saturday by the FBI and charged with one count of distributing information over social media related to explosives and weapons of mass destruction.

According to federal authorities, Jarrett William Smith, a 24-year-old native of South Carolina, discussed plans to “bomb a major US news network” and destroy cell phone towers, talked about targeting Democratic presidential candidate Beto O’Rourke, shared detailed information online about how to build an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) and discussed killing members of the anarchist and antifascist Antifa organization.

A press release from US Attorney Stephen McAllister from the District of Kansas stated, “Smith, a private first class infantry soldier, joined the Army June 12, 2017, and was transferred to Fort Riley, Kan., on July 8, 2019. ... During a Facebook chat, Smith offered to teach other Facebook users to make cell phone explosive devices ‘in the style of the Afghans.’ ... On Aug. 19, 2019, Smith told an undercover investigator he was looking for “radicals” like himself.”

Included in the criminal complaint released on Monday is an extensive affidavit by Special Agent of the FBI Brandon LaMar who is “tasked with investigating both domestic and international terrorism.” The affidavit contains details of the extreme right-wing activities and associations of Jarrett William Smith going back to June 2016, a year before he enlisted in the US Army.

Smith was an associate of Craig Lang, a former US army soldier from Ayden, North Carolina who fought with the Right Sector—a neo-Nazi Ukrainian nationalist political party and paramilitary unit—during the Ukrainian crisis of 2014. The affidavit says that Smith had “spoken about his desire to travel to Ukraine to fight with the Ukraine-based violent far-right

paramilitary group, Azov Battalion.” The Azov Battalion had a history of war crimes in 2014 including mass looting, unlawful detention and torture and were also known to have worn helmets with swastika symbols and the runes of Adolf Hitler’s infamous black uniformed SS.

Craig Lang was also reported to have been captured along with two other former US military men in June 2017 while traveling in the war torn region of South Sudan without visas. It appears from the record that Smith was being mentored by Lang for participation in far-right paramilitary activities.

The document explains that Smith met with Lang in El Paso, Texas and, through their ongoing connection on Facebook, discussed plans for Smith to join the “fight in Ukraine.” Smith is quoted as saying, “No former military experience, but if I cannot find a slot in Ukraine by October I’ll be going into the Army... To fight is what I want to do. I’m willing to listen, learn, and train. But to work on Firearms is fine by me too.”

It was in his exchanges with Lang on Facebook that Smith provided detailed instructions on how to build IEDs with a cell phone detonator. In a subsequent testing interaction with an undercover FBI agent on September 20, Smith wrote, “I’ll include the instructions. This is a Middle East style bomb that if big enough or connected to the right explosive can damage or destroy US military vehicles. Most of the time it can obliterate civilian vehicles and people nearby.”

The undercover agent asked if he knew “anyone down in Texas that would be a good fit for fire, destruction and death?” Smith replied, “Outside of Beto? I don’t know enough people that would be relevant enough to cause a change if they died.”

Smith was arrested by the FBI the following day and told investigators that he readily provided explosives information online to anyone intending to cause harm

to others in order to cause “chaos.” If convicted, Smith faces up to 20 years in federal prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.



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