

Neo-Nazi would-be synagogue bomber arrested in Colorado

Julian James
6 November 2019

The FBI arrested 27-year-old Richard Holzer over the weekend for planning to blow up the Temple Emanuel synagogue in Pueblo, Colorado. The arrest was the outcome of an FBI sting operation against the white supremacist, who evidently had been under surveillance for some time. The arrest warrant was unveiled and Holzer's detention announced on Monday at a press conference at FBI headquarters in Denver.

The arrest came just over a year after the October 2018 mass shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In that attack, Robert Gregory Bowers, a 47-year-old fascist and anti-Semite, killed 11 worshippers and injured seven others. Last April, another gunman who had posted anti-Semitic messages online opened fire on a synagogue near San Diego, killing one person and injuring three others.

In addition to Holzer, at least 12 other people have been arrested for participating in plots to attack Jews since the Tree of Life shooting, according to the Anti-Defamation League. The ADL reports that incidents targeting Jews surged 57 percent in 2017. In the first half of this year, the ADL recorded 780 anti-Semitic episodes across the US.

Holzer was seized after receiving pipe bombs and 14 sticks of dynamite, all duds, from undercover agents posing as fellow white supremacists. The attacker said he was planning to bomb the synagogue late at night.

According to the affidavit, Holzer had posted a string of anti-Semitic statements on social media. In the course of the sting operation, he told an undercover agent that he was a former Ku Klux Klan member turned white-supremacist skinhead. He sent videos of himself with neo-Nazi paraphernalia, a machete and knives, vowing to carry out massacres against Jews which he described as "a move for our race" and part of a wider "racial holy war."

He also claimed to have poisoned Temple Emanuel's water supply with arsenic, though a later FBI investigation found no evidence of that having occurred. Holzer said he "wanted to put the synagogue on the ground and demolish it."

After meeting with several FBI undercover agents in mid-October to discuss plans to bomb the synagogue, Holzer met November 1 with the agents, who gave him the inert pipe bombs and dynamite. After his arrest, he gave an affidavit in which he said he would have gone ahead with the planned late-night bombing even if people had still been inside, because "anyone inside would be Jewish."

He was arraigned on Monday on charges of "obstructing persons in the enjoyment of their free exercise of religious beliefs, through force and the attempted use of explosives and fire." The charges carry a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison.

Another neo-Nazi, 29-year-old Wesley Gilreath, originally arrested in Denver in May on child pornography charges, was found by authorities to be scoping out mosques and synagogues in that city. He had attempted to purchase a gun and was researching mass shootings.

On Sunday, after the arrest of Holzer, the *Denver Post* reported on a group of men who were handing out anti-Semitic literature in downtown Boulder, Colorado.

While it is not known at this time whether Gilreath, Holzer or the men handing out literature in Boulder belong to organized state, national or international networks of neo-Nazis, such activity is on the rise. Brenton Tarrant, the mass killer who murdered 51 people at two mosques last March in Christchurch, New Zealand, boasted in his online manifesto of being part of an international network of white supremacists and fascists that includes hundreds of police and

military cells in countries across Europe and elsewhere.

Political responsibility for such heinous crimes and the growth of fascism rests with the ruling classes and governments around the world that are spreading anti-immigrant, racist and nationalist poison to divert the anger of masses of people away from the cause of soaring social inequality, poverty and war—the capitalist system. From the Trump administration in the US to the grand coalition government in Germany and all of the European Union governments, the established parties are deliberately promoting far-right conceptions and forces to facilitate their turn to war and dictatorship. This is their response to mounting economic and geopolitical crisis and, above all, the resurgence of the class struggle.

The Tree of Life massacre occurred on the eve of the 2018 midterm election in the US, under conditions where Trump was holding campaign rallies in which he denounced immigrants, attacked his political opponents as “socialists” and worked to incite far-right and fascist elements in his political base. Just days before Bowers attacked the Pittsburgh synagogue, Trump supporter Cesar Sayoc mailed 16 pipe bombs to prominent Democrats and critics of Trump, none of which detonated.

Holzer’s arrest takes place as Trump responds to the Democrats’ impeachment inquiry with a series of fascist speeches, including to police audiences, in which he denounces “open border, socialist” Democrats and sanctuary cities as attacks on native-born US citizens.

The Democrats, for their part, say virtually nothing about Trump’s fascist rhetoric or his Gestapo-like attacks on immigrants. Instead, they seek to impeach him on the grounds of threatening US “national security” by withholding military aid from Ukraine and ceding influence to Russia in Syria, while hailing the FBI, CIA and military as the bulwarks of American democracy.

This goes hand in hand with their promotion of racial politics, which compliment the racist politics of the white supremacists. This is exemplified by the *New York Times*’ “1619 Project,” which seeks to rewrite US history as an unending effort by “white people” to oppress black people, denying the progressive content of the American Revolution and Civil War and erasing the class struggle from the historical record. This is to

form the reactionary axis of the Democrats’ 2020 election campaign.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact