

# California fertility clinic struck by car bomb, leaving 1 dead and 4 injured

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On Saturday May 17, Guy Edward Bartkus, a 25-year-old resident of Twentynine Palms, California, targeted the American Reproductive Centers fertility clinic in Palm Springs, California with a large car bomb, killing himself and injuring four others.

The car bomb was detonated outside of normal operating hours and none of the four people injured were employees or patients of the clinic. However, the massive blast caused extensive damage to the facility and neighboring buildings. The embryos and identifying medical records inside the clinic remain safe and were secured by local firefighter personnel.

A nurse who works in the perinatal unit at Desert Regional Medical Center told the WSWS the fertility clinic is directly across the street from the hospital. "I had just sat down at the nurses station to chart and the sound, the shake, the vibration was freezing.

"I didn't know whether to stand up, run, or duck. We have a helipad, so I thought the helicopter had collided into the building. Next thing we have is debris coming down off the ceilings. I'm thinking the ceilings are going to collapse. All the windows facing the fertility center were blown out."

The nurse continued: "The first thing that came to my mind were my patients because all three rooms faced towards the fertility center. As I was walking towards them, they were coming out with their babies crying and shaking. I reassured them that they were okay and safe. I sat them at the nursing station. They were still crying and just scared.

"The fear I had, I had to contain all of that to focus on my patients. There are shutters in the patient's rooms; they were completely open and there was debris all over the floor and cracked walls. By 12:30, all of management was there and we went on complete lockdown, nobody could come in or leave. Parents that had left before the blast couldn't come back in; it was really traumatizing for them."

David Rios, owner of the nearby Velvet Rope hotel told the WSWS, "My hotel is one street over from where the bombing took place. Debris from the car flew over into our property causing damage to the roof and AC units. Car parts flew into the side of the building and some parts hit the condensers. The damage is extensive and we're looking at close to \$200,000 in damages.

"I notified my insurance to start the process of making a claim and within a couple of minutes they said they weren't sure if it was going to be guaranteed because they didn't know how it was going to be categorized. By Monday morning my insurance denied

the claim stating it was because the FBI had categorized it as a domestic act of terrorism.

"I thought about appealing, but the advice that was given from the insurance adjuster is the insurance company has the right to reject me for next year and if they do reject me it will be on my record for seven years and it will be very hard, to slim, to find companies that will provide me insurance. They said in the long run it's probably best that you don't try to keep fighting it because next year they will probably drop you."

Rios added, "Being self-employed in a small business I see the severity of what we deal with now when you're personally impacted and your doors are shut from something that you pay as security, it's a shame. The greed that I see from these multi-million-dollar companies not coming to our defense and insurance agents telling me that if you continue this, you're looking at a possibility of not getting insured next year, so to me it's basically the insurance company committing an act of fraud."

Bartkus, a self-proclaimed "pro-mortalist" and "anti-natalist," terms associated with a deeply demoralized and nihilistic perspective that life is not worth living and should not be perpetuated, justified his actions with a 30-minute video manifesto published online just before the attack.

The full video and transcription of Bartkus' manifesto has not been released by authorities but key excerpts and themes reported by the media showcases a highly reactionary and pessimistic perspective.

In his manifesto Bartkus expressed admiration for Sandy Hook shooter Adam Lanza and described life as a "disease." He claimed that reproduction is immoral because children cannot give their consent to be born.

"I'm angry that I exist and that, you know, nobody got my consent to bring me here," Bartkus stated in his manifesto.

On a separate posting online, Bartkus identifies himself as the perpetrator of the attack and explained that his main motive for the bombing was to commit suicide.

In the same post he says in part, "...your death is already a guarantee, and you can thank your parents for that one. All a pro-mortalist is saying is let's make it happen sooner rather than later."

The FBI has stated that Bartkus was not on their radar despite videos on YouTube reportedly posted by Bartkus which shows him testing out homemade explosives in the desert, months before the May 17 attack.

Other information revealed about Bartkus' background shows that he was estranged from his father due to a divorce and was living with his mother at the time.

The father revealed that he had not spoken to his son in over 10 years and that there was a prior incident where Bartkus, 9-years-old at the time, burnt down their family home in Waterbury, Connecticut, while playing with matches.

The father revealed that as a teenager Bartkus had an early fascination with pyrotechnics, such as smoke and stink bombs, but that it never escalated to more serious explosives.

The main focus of the official investigation and media coverage has been on Bartkus' antisocial and nihilistic views, but very few answers have been given on how someone with no military background was able to produce a car bomb of such a massive scale.

Police investigators are claiming that Bartkus built the bomb in the garage of his home in Twentynine Palms, a small desert city in San Bernardino County. As of the 2020 census, just over 26,000 people lived in the town. Thomas Bickel, a neighbor of Bartkus, told ABC7 that police only allowed people back on the street on Monday after police discovered more explosives in Bartkus' home.

"All they really told me, the guy's exact words were he had like an explosives laboratory in there," Bickel told ABC7. "Although he built a pretty big bomb that he took down to Palm Springs, there was still enough material in there to do serious damage... That's why it took almost three days for them to clear the area, because they had to be really careful."

"I know how powerful and destructive IEDs can be," Bickel said in a separate interview with the *New York Post*. While in the US Army, Bickel was injured by an improvised explosive device during a deployment to Afghanistan.

The largest employer in Twentynine Palms is the massive Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center (MCAGCC). It is the largest Marine Corps base in the US by land area and serves as training facility for large-scale live-fire exercises.

In 2021 several pounds of plastic explosives went missing from the base. NBC Palm Springs conducted an investigation, which included attempts to interview military personnel but their "inquiries were largely met with silence from military officials."

The armed forces are a pole of attraction to, and cultivate, some of the most backwards and violent elements that capitalist society has to offer. So far there has been no word if Bartkus received any aid from military personnel among the highly militarized environment in which he grew up in, but this should be the subject of further investigation.

Just last month, US Marine Chance Brannon was sentenced to nine years in prison for the 2022 firebombing of a Planned Parenthood clinic in Southern California. Evidence submitted during the trial include photos of Brannon giving a Nazi salute alongside an unidentified person wearing a US Marine Corps uniform. Prosecutors also claim he planned several other attacks including on an LGBTQ pride night celebration at Dodger Stadium.

Following last week's explosion, local officials, including Palm Springs Chief of Police Andrew G. Mills and Mayor Pro Tem

Naomi Soto, reassured locals that they were safe and that it was time to get local businesses up and running again.

Not one official commented on the worsening social conditions facing working class youth which have played a detrimental role in shaping the demoralized outlook and conceptions espoused by Bartkus.

The complete bankruptcy of capitalist politics and their representatives was personified by the statements given by Assistant Director of the LA FBI Field Office Akil Davis where he stated, "We were able to save all the embryos at this facility. *Good guys one, bad guys zero.*" [emphasis added]

Whenever a violent outburst occurs in the United States—and they do with frightening regularity—representatives of the ruling class often employ simple criteria such as "good" and "bad" in order to moralize and individualize the actions of the perpetrator. This is done to obscure the central role of the ruling class and the historic levels of social inequality they oversee in creating the conditions that give rise to such violent outbursts.

As with school shootings and other mass outbursts of violence, Bartkus's actions can only be understood as a byproduct of the society he existed in.

Since Bartkus had been conscious the US government has been waging unending war abroad and cutting taxes for the oligarchy while slashing social spending. COVID-19 has been allowed to spread almost entirely unchecked in the name of profits, with the population told to accept mass illness and death, resulting in the unnecessary deaths of more than 1 million Americans and millions globally.

As Trump's "Big, Beautiful Bill" makes its way through Congress, repressive institutions such as the military and immigration Gestapo will receive additional funding by kicking millions of the most vulnerable off of Medicaid, SNAP and other social programs needed for basic survival.

Trump's counterrevolution against all social gains made by the working class, and the Democrats spineless complicity and support for these attacks, will serve as a catalyst for opposition which must be given progressive outlet. What is needed is a working class movement from below, guided by a socialist program, that can overturn the outdated and bankrupt capitalist system which subordinates all social resources to the dictates of profit.



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