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Indiana Man Pleads Guilty to Possessing Unregistered Destructive Devices During Portland Protests

PORTLAND, Ore.—An Indiana man pleaded guilty today in federal court after repeatedly and intentionally jeopardizing the lives of police officers, destroying public property, and encouraging others to commit violence during protests in Portland.

Malik Fard Muhammad, 25, pleaded guilty to two counts of possessing unregistered destructive devices.

According to court documents, in late summer 2020, Muhammad traveled to Portland with his girlfriend from their home in Indianapolis to violently engage in area riots. On September 5, 2020, during a large civil disturbance in east Portland, demonstrators threw dangerous objects at police, including commercial grade fireworks, Molotov cocktails, and bottles. At least one demonstrator was seriously burned by a Molotov cocktail thrown in the direction of police. Muhammad was present at this event and provided baseball bats to members of the crowd.

Following Muhammad's arrest in October 2020, law enforcement seized his cell phone and found messages where he bragged about providing the baseball bats to other rioters. The cell phone also contained a shopping list including common supplies used to make a Molotov cocktail. The day after the demonstration, police located a discarded baseball bat with a Goodwill price tag in the area where the event occurred. Police found the Goodwill store where the bat was purchased and obtained surveillance footage showing Muhammad and his girlfriend buying the bats and several "growler" bottles.

On September 21, 2020, during a large demonstration near the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office Penumbra Kelly Building, law enforcement observed an individual light on fire and throw an object toward the building. One officer observed the burning object flying through the air toward his vehicle, landing approximately 15 feet from a police sound truck. Officers recovered the unexploded device. It consisted of a yellow glass growler with a Goodwill sticker on the bottom, a cloth wick, and an ignitable liquid. It was later determined that the growler was one of the items purchased at Goodwill by Muhammad and his girlfriend. A DNA analysis also linked the growler to Muhammad.

On September 23, 2020, protesters set fire to and broke windows at the Multnomah County Justice Center. When officers advanced toward the crowd, an individual threw a Molotov cocktail in a large yellow growler that landed in front of the officers, shattered, and exploded into a large fireball. While some officers were able to move out of the way, one officer's leg caught

fire. Several videos obtained by law enforcement show Muhammad throwing the explosive device.

On October 11, 2020, police were monitoring a protest involving approximately 250 people in downtown Portland. Members of the group began heavily vandalizing various buildings and parks including the Oregon Historical Society, Portland State University, a Starbucks coffee shop, and a Bank of America branch, among others. Law enforcement observed Muhammad in the crowd dressed in black. Portland Police officers reported observing Muhammad using a metal baton to smash the windows of several buildings and arrested him after a short chase. Muhammad possessed a loaded handgun magazine in his pocket. A loaded handgun matching the magazine found on Muhammad's person was found discarded near the location of his arrest.

Muhammad's trip to Portland does not appear to be an isolated event. Investigators obtained evidence that he traveled to Louisville, Kentucky in August 2020 to meet with anti-government and anti-authority violent extremist groups to conduct firearms and tactical training. Investigators also obtained several public social media posts by Muhammad promoting violence toward law enforcement in other cities including Kenosha, Wisconsin, and Chicago.

On May 28, 2021, Muhammad was charged by [criminal complaint](#) with possession of unregistered destructive devices, engaging in civil disorder and obstructing law enforcement, and using explosives to commit a felony. Later, on June 15, 2021, a federal grand jury in Portland indicted Muhammad on the same charges.

Possessing an unregistered destructive device is punishable by up to 10 years in federal prison per count of conviction. With Muhammad's continued acceptance of responsibility, the U.S. Attorney's Office will recommend a sentence of 10 years in federal prison. He will be sentenced on June 21, 2022 before U.S. District Court Chief Judge Marco A. Hernandez.

Today's change of plea is part of a global resolution of Muhammad's federal and state criminal cases. He is scheduled to plead guilty and be sentenced in Multnomah County Circuit Court tomorrow.

U.S. Attorney Scott Erik Asphaug of the District of Oregon made the announcement.

The Portland Police Bureau, FBI, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives are investigating the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Adam E. Delph is prosecuting the case.

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