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United States Attorney
Eastern District of Washington

PRESS RELEASE

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Washington Man Sentenced to 32 Years for Attempted Bombing of Martin Luther King Unity March

Spokane -- The Justice Department announced today that Kevin William Harpham, 37, of Colville, Wash., has been sentenced to 32 years in prison for the placement of the improvised explosive device alongside the planned Martin Luther King Jr. Day Unity March held on January 17, 2011, in Spokane, Wash. Mr. Harpham will serve the rest of his life under court supervision after he is released from prison.

On March 9, 2011, Mr. Harpham was arrested for placing the explosive device alongside the Unity March. On Sept. 7, 2011, Mr. Harpham pleaded guilty to two counts of a superseding indictment; attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction and attempt to cause bodily injury with an explosive device because of actual or perceived race, color and national origin of any person. The Martin Luther King Jr. Day Unity March was attended by about 2,000 individuals, including racial minorities. The explosive device placed by Mr. Harpham was capable of inflicting serious injury or death, according to laboratory analysis conducted by the FBI. Mr. Harpham admitted that he is a white supremacist and white separatist. Mr. Harpham placed the explosive device at the Unity March with the intent to cause bodily injury to the person or persons in order to further his racist beliefs.

Michael C. Ormsby, U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Washington, said, "I commend the law enforcement efforts at all phases of the investigation and prosecution of this matter. This was one of the most thorough investigations that I have ever seen and involved multi-levels of law enforcement and multiple offices and other professionals. Our office received significant assistance from the Civil Rights Division and National Security Division of the Justice Department. All who participated should be thanked and congratulated, this was truly a team effort." Ormsby also added, "It is very important that Mr. Harpham receive the significant sentence that he did today to send the message to our community that hate and violence will not be tolerated."

“Acts of hate like this one have no place in our country in the year 2011, but yet, unfortunately, we continue to see attempted violence in our communities due to racial animus,” said Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division Thomas Perez. “The Justice Department is committed to enforcing the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, and all the tools in our law enforcement arsenal, to prosecute such egregious crimes.

“This case underscores the continuing threat from those who seek to express their hatred through violence and the serious consequences these individuals face for such actions,” said Lisa Monaco, Assistant Attorney General for National Security. “The sentence handed down today is the culmination of an outstanding investigation conducted jointly by federal, state and local law enforcement officials.

“Today, Mr. Harpham faces the consequences of his hate-filled act. A prototypical “lone wolf” such as Mr. Harpham presents a particularly vexing threat—with nothing foreshadowing a carefully planned attack,” said Laura M. Laughlin, Special Agent-in-Charge of the FBI Seattle office. “However, the actions of everyday citizens, the Spokane Police Department, the Spokane Explosives Disposal Unit, and the round-the-clock work of Joint Terrorism Task Force and its local, state, and federal members unraveled Mr. Harpham’s plan and swiftly brought him to justice. We will continue to tirelessly disrupt and rapidly apprehend others who attempt to express their hatred through violence.”

This investigation was conducted by the Inland Northwest Joint Terrorism Task Force (INJTTF) comprised of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the U.S. Marshals Service, the Federal Air Marshal Service, the U.S. Border Patrol, the Department of Homeland Security – Homeland Security Investigations, the Spokane Police Department, the Spokane County Sheriff’s Office, and the Washington State Patrol, and with assistance from Stevens County Sheriff’s Office and Washington State Employment Security Department. The Stevens County Road Department also provided significant assistance.

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