

Oakland, California: FBI Foils Another Fake Terror Plot

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On February 8, federal authorities arrested a San Jose man for attempting to set off a car bomb outside a bank in Oakland, California. The charges filed against Matthew Llaneza, 28, stem from a months-long operation staged by the FBI's South Bay Joint Terrorism Task Force. The event is the latest in a long series of bogus terror plots hatched or otherwise encouraged by the federal government.

According to the sparse criminal complaint submitted 10 days ago, the government's involvement with the Arizona native—a recent Muslim convert—dates back to November of last year, when undercover FBI agent Christopher Monika met with and convinced Llaneza that he was “connected with the Taliban and the mujahedin in Afghanistan.”

How or why Llaneza first became a target of the FBI goes unmentioned in the official narrative, but over the next several months Monika and Llaneza allegedly met several times to organize the bombing of an Oakland Bank of America branch—supposedly chosen because “the name of the bank and Oakland's location as a center of protests made it an appropriate target.” The operation came to an end on February 8, when Llaneza tried to detonate an inoperable car bomb and was promptly arrested.

At no point did the plot pose a “threat to the public,” notes a press release from the US attorney's office. Like a number of high-profile, supposed terror operations foiled by the US government over the past decade, every stage of the sham conspiracy had been created and carefully managed by the FBI. Virtually all of the key elements in the plot were in fact supplied by the federal government: a rented storage unit in Hayward, an SUV to deliver the would-be car bomb, the fake explosives and the expertise needed to assemble them.

According to the affidavit, Llaneza's greatest tangible contribution to the scheme was the purchase of two cellphones and a nine-volt battery (on an outing with his undercover FBI handler, no less) that were later assembled by the authorities into a phony trigger device. Until February 8, when Llaneza took the lead and tried to detonate the inert explosives in Oakland, most of his involvement seems to have consisted of tagging along with his government sponsor.

There have been no allegations that Llaneza, depicted by the government's criminal complaint as a calculating and committed pro-Taliban terrorist, had any ties to Al Qaeda or the Taliban. Absent any co-conspirators, any evidence of involvement with a terrorist organization, or even any evidence of independently trying to establish that involvement, undercover agent Monika was Llaneza's sole connection to, and undoubtedly the driving force behind, the entire operation.

By all accounts, Matthew Llaneza is a mentally ill individual. Santa Clara county court documents from 2011 describe the man as psychotic and suffering from bipolar disorder, a record that was almost certainly known to the FBI before it began its sting operation in November of last year. Llaneza was involuntarily hospitalized and placed on a 72-hour psychiatric hold by authorities in April 2011, after acting strangely and becoming combative at his father's San Jose home. Police records show Llaneza claimed to be suicidal, with a history of substance abuse and mental health problems.

When police later discovered Llaneza's ownership of an AK-47 assault rifle, brought from Arizona and illegal under California's gun laws, he was convicted on weapons charges and sentenced to a brief jail term. "You would not have to spend more than a few minutes with him without it being painfully obvious that there were some severe psychological issues," said Cameron Bowman, Llaneza's former defense attorney. Legal proceedings against the accused are currently on hold until March 8, pending a possible review of his mental state and legal competency.

In light of the circumstances surrounding past government-manufactured terror plots, the FBI—known for its mass surveillance of and fishing expeditions for "radicals" among the Muslim population—most likely found in Llaneza another easy mark: a mentally unstable, suggestible figure who could be counted on to play his assigned part in a terror farce first created, and then thwarted, by the state security services.

With the help of a servile corporate media, these staged terrorist conspiracies are designed to put flesh on the bones of the Obama administration's "war on terror" propaganda. When a genuine Al Qaeda plot to blow up a California bank is nowhere to be found, the Obama Justice Department simply invents one—all to keep alive a supposedly ubiquitous terrorist threat, cited for more than a decade to justify a permanent state of war abroad and police-state measures at home.

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