

U.S. Attorney O'Shea: Madison man charged with firebombing building

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MADISON, WIS. – A Madison, Wisconsin man was arrested today on a charge related to the May 2022 firebombing of a Madison office building.

According to court documents, Hridindu Sankar Roychowdhury, 29, is charged with one count of attempting to cause damage by means of fire or an explosive. Roychowdhury was arrested earlier today in Boston, Massachusetts.

“According to the complaint, Mr. Roychowdhury used an incendiary device in violation of federal law in connection with his efforts to terrorize and intimidate a private organization,” said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen of the Justice Department’s National Security Division. “I commend the commitment and professionalism of law enforcement personnel who worked exhaustively to ensure that justice is served.”

“This group of local and federal law enforcement officers has worked, with the federal prosecutors, diligently and creatively to move the investigation forward,” said U.S. Attorney Timothy M. O’Shea for the Western District of Wisconsin. “This case is an example of the results law enforcement can achieve when local and federal law investigators work as a team.”

Madison Police Chief Shon F. Barnes said, “For months, our detectives remained committed to finding those responsible for this arson. When tips and leads were limited, they never gave up. Their persistence is proof that hateful acts do not have a place in Madison. I applaud their work and want to thank our federal partners for all of their help leading up to this arrest.”

“I’m very proud of the tireless and determined efforts the combined federal, state

and local team put in to identify and arrest this individual,” said ATF Special Agent in Charge William McCrary of the St. Paul Field Division. “I can assure you, our ATF Certified Fire Investigator invested long hours into this case. It is very satisfying to me to see that this alleged perpetrator has been placed in custody.”

“The FBI conducts investigations when someone crosses the line from expression of protected personal beliefs to violations of federal law,” said Special Agent in Charge Michael E. Hensle of the FBI Milwaukee Field Office. “We remained vigilant during this investigation and worked with our law enforcement partners to methodically and thoroughly address every aspect of this act of violence. The arrest today represents these efforts and highlights the work done by law enforcement to protect the safety of our citizens.”

According to the complaint, on Mother’s Day, Sunday, May 8, 2022, at approximately 6:06 a.m., law enforcement responded to an active fire at an office building located in Madison, Wisconsin. Once inside the building, police observed a mason jar under a broken window; the jar was broken, and the lid and screw top were burned black. The police also saw a purple disposable lighter near the mason jar. On the opposite wall from the window, the police saw another mason jar with the lid on and a blue cloth tucked into the top; the cloth was singed. The jar was about half full of a clear fluid that smelled like an accelerant. Outside of the building, someone spray painted on one wall, “If abortions aren’t safe then you aren’t either” and, on another wall, a large “A” with a circle around it and the number “1312.” During the investigation, law enforcement collected DNA from the scene of the attack.

In March 2023, law enforcement identified Roychowdhury as a possible suspect. Local police officers observed Roychowdhury dispose of food in a public trash can; the officers recovered the leftover food and related items, and law enforcement collected DNA from the food. On March 17, 2023, law enforcement advised that a forensic biologist examined the DNA evidence recovered from the attack scene and compared it to the DNA collected from the food contents. The forensic biologist found the two samples matched and likely were the same individual.

In March 2023, Roychowdhury travelled from Madison, Wisconsin, to Portland, Maine, and he purchased a one-way ticket from Boston to Guatemala City, departing Tuesday morning, March 28, 2023. Law enforcement arrested Roychowdhury at Boston Logan International Airport. Roychowdhury will have a detention hearing in Boston.

Roychowdhury is scheduled to appear in U.S. District Court in Boston today. A date for his appearance in federal court in Madison has not been set.

If convicted, Roychowdhury faces a mandatory minimum penalty of five years and a maximum of 20 years in prison. The charge against him is the result of an investigation by the Madison Police Department, Wisconsin State Capitol Police Department, ATF, the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, Homeland Security Investigations, Dane County Sheriff's Office, with the assistance of the FBI Boston Field Office, Boston Police Department, Massachusetts State Police, U.S. Coast Guard, Federal Air Marshal Service, and Transportation Security Administration.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Elizabeth Altman for the Western District of Wisconsin and Trial Attorney Justin Sher of the National Security Division's Counterterrorism Section are prosecuting the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Amanda Beck for the District of Massachusetts handled the appearance in Boston.

An indictment is merely an allegation, and the defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.