

## IN-DEPTH COVERAGE: Backpack Bomber Kevin Harpham Sentenced

by Cory Howard, Executive Producer Interactive, KHQ.com

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SPOKANE, Wash. - The man who confessed to leaving a pipe bomb inside of a backpack on the Martin Luther King, Jr. Unity March this January was sentenced to 32 years in prison Tuesday.

Kevin Harpham, 37, was given the maximum sentence from U.S. District Court Judge Justin Quackenbush who said Harpham gave him "no choice" after he said Harpham showed no remorse and took no responsibility for his actions.

"It's beyond comprehension that you would not take responsibility for what you have plead guilty to," Quackenbush said to Harpham. "I hope you'll pause and reflect and know that we are all inhabitants of one planet. It's not for you or I to decide who lives and who does not live. I am distressed that you appear to me to not be the least bit apologetic...It seems you're still not in the frame of mind by letting these racist, prejudices control your actions."

In September, Harpham plead guilty to attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction as well as the hate crime of placing the bomb in an effort to target minorities. On that day, Jan. 17, officials said about 2,000 people marched for peace and non-violence, many right by the backpack Harpham left near a bench at the corner of Main Ave. and Washington St. in downtown Spokane. Inside that backpack, the FBI said Harpham placed a bomb loaded with lead fishing weights and coated in rat poison, an anti-coagulant.

In exchange for pleading guilty to two charges, prosecutors dropped the two other charges of using a firearm in relation to a crime of violence and unauthorized possession of an unregistered explosive device.

Recently unsealed photographs show Harpham walked in the parade and snapped several pictures of minorities, including African-American children, as well as a Jewish man who was wearing a yarmulke, which prosecutors said were clear targets of his scheme.

Three workers, contracted by the City of Spokane for the parade, discovered the bomb at 9:22 AM. They called police and by 11:22 AM, organizers changed the course of the parade route - which is the main reason FBI agents believe the bomb did not detonate.

In a press conference immediately following the sentencing, FBI special agent Frank Harrill, the supervisory senior resident agent in Spokane, said Harpham's detonation device range could reach approximately 1,000 feet. Once the parade was re-routed, Harrill believed the detonator fell outside of that range.

Ultimately, bomb technicians disabled the bomb but, at the time, officials called the bombing attempt an **act of domestic terrorism**.

"This event was celebrating non-violent change and clearly what Harpham attempted to do was the polar opposite," Harrill said. "At an event that was designed to celebrate the ties that bind us all, he was attempting to destroy those."

Back in court Tuesday, standing before the judge in a white jailhouse jumpsuit, Harpham defended his actions saying, "I am not guilty of the acts that I am accused of and that I plead guilty to."

Before the sentence was handed down, Harpham admitted to placing the device along the parade route but insisted that the bomb was not meant for the crowd but a building instead.

"As crazy as it sounds, you've seen the pictures where the backpack was placed. The backpack was actually upward," Harpham said. "I aimed by my

"As long as it was clear and there was nobody there, I was going to fire this thing off," Harpham continued. "The whole point of the building was to just add effect -- just a statement of protest."

Harpham told Quackenbush that the the bomb was built as a protest against concepts like multiculturalism and unity, explaining that it would be no different than a Christian person protesting gay pride or gay marriage.

"Except that it was a lot more dangerous, a lot more extreme," Harpham said. "Just a statement that people out there don't believe in these ideas."

In the press conference, Harrill said there was no merit to Harpham's claims. "That device was constructed with a clear lethal purpose and I'm not sure why you would coat shrapnel with anticoagulant to break windows."

Harpham also said he built the device long before the Martin Luther King Day Parade. "You should know that when I built the device it wasn't for this event it was for something else that I backed out of," Harpham said. "I threw it in the corner of my house and it sat around for a while and this event came up and I got a creative idea how I would use it and it's not how I am accused of being - or how I plead guilty that I was going to use it." Harpham did not elaborate on what that event was that he originally built the bomb for.

Just before he was set to be sentenced, Harpham's attorney Roger Peven, tried unsuccessfully to withdraw his guilty plea by questioning whether the explosive device in question met the legal definition of a bomb. He also pointed to an expert witness, a former FBI agent, whom he said would testify Harpham's device was not an explosive bomb but did not explain why.

The judge denied the oral motion to withdrawal the plea agreement.

The FBI described Harpham as a long-time white supremacist and prototypical lone wolf, who hardly left his rural home near Addy, Wash. Harrill said investigators tracked down Harpham less than a month after the Jan. 17 parade because agents used the intact, unexploded bomb to trace several lead weights to a Wal-Mart in Colville. Harrill said Harpham purchased several of those weights. That was around Valentine's Day and Harrill said they started surveilling Harpham immediately.

Then on Feb. 28, investigators obtained Harpham's DNA from samples he provided while serving in the U.S. Army. Within days, the FBI linked DNA from Harpham to the strap of the backpack that held the bomb.

On March, 9, officials arrested Harpham using a ruse to lure him outside, since Harpham owned an assault rifle and a handgun. Harrill said Harpham responded to an online car advertisement that he thought was well below blue book value when he in fact he was meeting with the FBI's Hostage Rescue Team.

The FBI's Hostage Rescue Team, including FBI's Seattle SWAT Team, the Stevens County Sheriff's Office and others took part in the arrest.

Recently unsealed court documents show that the FBI found evidence that showed Harpham went to great lengths to ensure the bomb he constructed would work as he planned. In a gravel pit about a mile from his home in Addy, investigators found parts believed to be used as a timing devices and multiple books about manufacturing bombs.

Harpham is an Army veteran who has extensive ties to white supremacist groups. Under the alias "Joe Snuffy" officials showed that Harpham made 1,139 postings on the Vanguard News Network, a white supremacist website. He was also a card-carrying member of the National Alliance, a white supremacist group.

Harpham served in the Army from 1996 to 1999 at Joint Base Lewis-McChord. On Tuesday, the judge raised concerns that Harpham may have fostered his racist views while in the Army, noting a swastika flag Harpham flew in his barracks. Harpham said the flag was not a swastika but a Salvadorian flag.

Finally in court, Harpham said he plans to still pursue a jury trial. "I am not guilty of the acts that I plead guilty to," Harpham said. "There is a reason why I put it where I put it and my intent was not to hurt people. Although I admit it wasn't exactly legal, either. I am still going to pursue trying to get to a trial so I can tell a jury what I was doing."

It is unclear where Harpham will serve his prison time yet. Federal officials will not release that information until he arrives at the prison for security reason. Once Harpham leaves prison, he would remain on probation for the rest of his life.

"Anytime there is a collision of hate and violent intent, that we as a society, we as a community, we as law enforcement have to stand against that, work to prevent it. work to prevent the seeds of ideology that give rise to

that and ultimately," Harrill said. "When these events do happen, work quickly to bring those individuals to justice."

Harpham's defense team declined to comment Tuesday.

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