

# 2 NYC women arrested on terror charges

NEW YORK (AP) — Two women were arrested Thursday on charges they plotted to wage violent jihad by building a homemade bomb and using it for a Boston Marathon-type attack.

One of the women, Nolle Velentzas, had been “obsessed with pressure cookers since the Boston Marathon attacks in 2013” and made jokes alluding to explosives after receiving one as a gift, according to a criminal complaint. And it says in a conversation with an undercover investigator about the women’s willingness to fight, she pulled a knife and asked, “Why can’t we be bad b-----s?”

The complaint unsealed in federal court in Brooklyn names Velentzas and her former roommate, Asia Siddiqui, as the targets of an undercover investigation into the thwarted homemade terror plot.

The women, both from Queens, were held without bail after a brief court appearance where they spoke only to say they understood the charges against them.

“My client will enter a plea of not guilty, if and when there is an indictment. I know it’s a serious case, but we’re

going to fight it out in court,” said Siddiqui’s lawyer, Thomas Dunn. Velentzas’ attorney had no comment.

The women repeatedly expressed support for violent jihad during conversations with the undercover, who secretly recorded them, according to the complaint.

In 2009, Siddiqui, 31, wrote a poem in a magazine published by al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula that declared there is “no excuse to sit back and wait — for the skies rain martyrdom,” investigators wrote in court papers. Velentzas, 28, called Osama bin Laden one of her heroes and said she and Siddiqui were “citizens of the Islamic State,” they said.

Since 2014, the pair plotted to build an explosive device to use in a terrorist attack on American soil, the complaint says. They “researched and acquired some of the components of a car bomb, like the one used in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing; a fertilizer bomb, like the one used in the 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City; and a pressure cooker bomb, like the one used in the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing,” authorities wrote.

# UNEMPLOYMENT: Non-farm employment rose by 270 jobs in 2014

Continued from 1A

ger be reporting major job losses year after year.

“We don’t have to worry about that particular situation anymore,” he said.

The Port of Morrow, meanwhile, continues to add jobs, which boosts employment in both counties. Multi-million-dollar expansions at ConAgra Foods Lamb Weston and Tillamook Cheese added 140 direct jobs alone in 2014.

“They’ve been a job engine for a decade,” Fridley said of the port. “The recession hasn’t even hit them.”

Non-farm employment rose by 270 jobs over the year in Umatilla County, with manufacturing leading the way. Over-the-year job growth was even more impressive in Morrow County, surging up 520 jobs thanks primarily to a construction boom at the port.

Morrow County also boasts the fifth-highest average annual wages in the state, at \$41,354. That is helped in part by the Colum-

bia River Enterprise Zone in Boardman, which provides businesses a break on their property taxes in return for a number of concessions — one of which is to offer employees a minimum average salary of \$59,106 per year.

Fridley said the area’s job figures should remain steady. One source of concern is Sykes Enterprises, he said, which announced last year it would close its call center in Milton-Freewater while offering more than 200 employees the option to work from home. Two months later, Sykes said it would not only keep the call center open but add another 50 jobs.

Overall, the employment rates are good news for the economy, though Fridley said Umatilla County still has a ways to go.

“Stable is the more likely direction for now,” he said. “It all depends on the growth rates.”

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# PLANNING: Stores cannot be within 1,000 feet of a school

Continued from 1A

dations include:

- Marijuana facilities must be located in a service commercial or central mixed use zone.

- Stores or dispensaries cannot be located within 1,000 feet of a public or private elementary, middle, or high school or another marijuana facility.

- A marijuana facility won’t be permitted in the “historic city center,” which the commission defined as being between southeast Third Street, southwest Third Street, the Umatilla River and the railroad tracks.

- All commercial marijuana facilities and grows will have to be conditionally approved by the planning commission before they can open.

- A marijuana growing operation cannot share the same address with a marijuana retail store.

- Commercial marijuana grows are only permitted in light industrial and exclusive farm use zones.

Keith May, former city councilman and owner of

MaySon’s Old Fashioned General Store, said he would prefer if marijuana stores and dispensaries were located by the airport, which would keep them away from the main part of the city and close to the Pendleton Police Department.

Commissioner Ryan DeGroff also liked the idea of opening up the airport industrial park to marijuana retailers.

“They would be up by the airport or by Graybeal Distributing or something out of the way,” he said.

Commission Chairman Scott Fairley said those opinions ran counter to what he was hearing from community members, who preferred keeping marijuana stores in a more central location, even within the downtown area.

May said he would close his shop and put his Pendleton house up for sale if a marijuana store ever moved to the city’s downtown.

Shortly thereafter, Commissioner Maureen McCormach proposed prohibiting marijuana facilities from the downtown area,

which eventually made it into the draft ordinance.

May made some proposals of his own, suggesting the commission also include a 1,000 foot buffer zone around the Round-Up Grounds and the Olney Cemetery, arguing minors frequented the grounds and some people used the cemetery as a park.

City Planner Evan MacKenzie said classifying the Round-Up Grounds as a facility frequented by minors was a slippery slope because places like grocery stores would also fall under that broad criteria.

David Moore, a Pendleton resident and medical marijuana card holder, said he wasn’t in favor of adding further regulations like the Olney buffer.

He said the Tutuilla Road area would be an ideal area for a marijuana store, granted it wasn’t too close to Sunridge Middle School or Grecian Heights Park.

Eventually, the commission found the park buffer too restrictive and removed it from the draft ordinance.

In addition to his thoughts

on the buffer zones, Moore also shared his experiences at medical marijuana dispensaries and the lengths he has to go through to find them.

“I’m a medical patient. I have to drive three hours to get my medicine,” he said, referring to Portland.

MacKenzie said one of the key differences between marijuana and liquor is that marijuana isn’t allowed to be consumed on site under state law, meaning most customers will be in-and-out.

“It’ll be our version of a package store,” he said.

McCormach said in her travels to California, she found medical marijuana dispensaries unobtrusive.

She also added that she owns a house in Washington state, where voters legalized recreational marijuana in 2012.

“It absolutely changed nothing whatsoever,” she said.

City council is scheduled to consider the ordinance April 7.

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# FARMERS: Oregon marijuana demand in 2014 was 150,628 pounds

Continued from 1A

cover Canada, too,” Crawford said.

He said Oregon now grows the best pot in the country at reasonable prices, and quality would decline if large growers jumped into the business. Existing growers have refined their techniques over 20, 30 or 40 years, in some cases, he said.

“There’s a difference between large-scale agricultural producers and these marijuana producers,” he said. “They’re still small scale compared to a 10,000-acre wheat ranch. The way the Oregon market evolved was thousands of small growers producing high quality products and unique products. You couldn’t do it on an industrial scale.”

There don’t appear to be any conventional farmers

clamoring to jump into the market. And for now, seeding the back 40 with *Sativa* isn’t legal.

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission, which will regulate wholesale commercial production under Measure 91, has yet to draft specific rules.

The law, which was approved by voters in the November 2014 election and takes effect July 1, allows individuals to possess up to eight ounces of pot and grow up to four plants per household for personal use.

As pot prohibition laws begin to recede nationally, however, the prospect of bigger markets and industrial-sized grow operations occasionally comes up in casual, just-wondering type of conversations, some producers say. What if Oregon’s grass seed growers decided to grow the other kind of grass? What if the

state’s nursery operators turned their greenhouse expertise to marijuana production?

Crawford said they shouldn’t bother, because supply already outstrips demand.

Crawford said cannabis — unofficially — is Oregon’s most valuable crop, with an estimated annual value approaching \$1 billion. Based on his surveys of legal and illegal growers, the state’s “internal marijuana demand” in 2014 was about 150,628 pounds. At \$150 an ounce, that’s \$361 million.

Medical marijuana growers grew and exported 391,694 pounds above the Oregon demand, worth another \$587 million, Crawford said. That makes the farm gate value of Oregon’s pot exports alone greater than the combined value of hazelnuts, pears, wine

grapes, Christmas trees and blueberries, according to Crawford’s estimates.

Crawford said his figures are based on self-reported data from growers he reached through a “chain referral” survey technique, in which the first respondents invite others in their social network to take part, and the sample size grows in a snowball fashion. Still, the underground nature of the industry makes it difficult to get precise information, Crawford acknowledged.

Bruce Pokarney, spokesman for the Oregon Department of Agriculture, said the department has no way to assess the state’s cannabis crop value. “But, assuming the OSU numbers are correct, marijuana would likely be at the top of the list of commodities in terms of production value,” he said in an email.

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