

Arrested gunman says he shot Philadelphia cop in Islam's name

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Philadelphia: A man using a gun stolen from police said he was acting in the name of Islam when he ambushed an officer sitting in his marked cruiser at an intersection, firing more than a dozen shots at point-blank range, authorities said Friday. The officer and the man were wounded during the barrage of gunfire, they said.

The man, 30-year-old Edward Archer, also pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group when he was questioned after his arrest in the shooting late Thursday, police said. Archer's mother, Valerie Holliday, told The Philadelphia Inquirer he had been hearing voices recently and had felt targeted by police and the family asked him to get help.

Police Commissioner Richard Ross described the attack on Officer Jesse Hartnett, captured on a police surveillance camera, as an attempted assassination.

"He just came out of nowhere and started firing on him," Ross said. "He just started firing with one aim and one aim only, to kill him."

Investigators believe Archer traveled to Saudi Arabia in 2011 and to Egypt in 2012, FBI special agent Eric Ruona said, and the purpose of that travel was being investigated by the FBI. But police said there was no indication anyone else was involved in the officer's ambush.

Ross said Archer told police he believed the police department defends laws that are contrary to Islam. Though Archer "clearly gave us a motive," Ross said, it's up to police to see what the evidence shows.

"It wasn't like laying it out completely, chapter and verse for us," he said. "We're left to say, 'OK, he's leaving a trail for us. Where's it going to lead us, if anywhere?'"

Federal agents joined local police in searching two Philadelphia area properties associated with Archer, including the home where his mother lives in suburban Yeadon, authorities said.

Capt. James Clark said Archer told investigators: "I follow Allah. I pledge my allegiance to the Islamic State, and that's why I did what I did."

Archer's mother described him as a devout Muslim. Jacob Bender, the executive director of the Philadelphia chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, an advocacy group, said he contacted about five inner-city mosques and found no one who knew of Archer. He said the motive for the ambush still appears to be conjecture.

"I think the important point is not to lay the blame for this on the entire Islamic community," he said.

The gunman fired at least 13 shots toward Hartnett, getting up next to the car and reaching through the driver's-side window, investigators said.

Despite being seriously wounded, Hartnett got out of his car, chased the shooter and returned fire, wounding his attacker in the buttocks, police said. Other officers chased Archer and apprehended him.

Hartnett, 33, was shot three times in an arm and will require multiple surgeries; he was listed in stable condition. Archer was treated and released into police custody.

Ross called it "absolutely amazing" that Harnett survived.

"It's nothing short of miraculous, and we're thankful for that," he said.

Last March, Archer pleaded guilty to firearms and assault charges stemming from a 2012 case but was immediately released and placed on probation, court records show. Records also show he was scheduled to be sentenced Monday in suburban Philadelphia in a traffic and forgery case.

The attorney who represented him in the firearms case was unavailable to comment Friday because he was in court, his office said. A message for his lawyer in the forgery case was not immediately returned.

Surveillance footage of the attack showed the gunman dressed in a white, long-sleeved tunic. When asked if the robe was considered Muslim garb, Ross said he didn't know and didn't think it mattered.

The 9mm pistol used by Archer was recovered at the scene of the shooting, police said. It had been stolen from an officer's home in October 2013, investigators said. Officials said they were trying to figure out how Archer got the weapon and whether it passed through other people's hands after the theft.

Hartnett was in good spirits, said his father, Robert Hartnett.

"He's a tough guy," he said.

Hartnett served in the Coast Guard and has been on the Philadelphia force for four years. He always wanted to be a police officer, his father said.

When Hartnett called in to report shots fired, he shouted, "I'm bleeding heavily!" into his police radio.

Jim Kenney, in his first week as mayor of the nation's fifth-largest city, called Archer's actions "abhorrent" and "terrible" and said they have nothing to do with the teachings of Islam.

"This is a criminal with a stolen gun who tried to kill one of our officers," he said. "It has nothing to do with being a Muslim or following the Islamic faith."

In December 2014, a gunman announced online he was planning to shoot two "pigs" in retaliation for the chokehold death of Eric Garner and ambushed two New York police officers in a patrol car, fatally shooting them before running to a subway station and killing himself. Investigators said he had no connection to terrorism.

- AP