

Mosque focus falls on former Dundee teen

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By Paul Daquilante

Cody Crawford, whose troubled teen years in Dundee led his mother to place him in a controversial behavior modification facility in Costa Rica, has become a focus of investigation into the Nov. 28 firebombing of the Salman Alfarisi Islamic Center.

The Corvallis mosque was set ablaze just days after one of its worshippers allegedly tried to detonate a powerful car bomb at a holiday tree-lighting ceremony in Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square. Now 24, Crawford has been living with his mother, Robin, about 200 feet down the street from the mosque.

Crawford has not been charged in connection with the incident.

However, investigators secured a warrant to conduct a search of his residence and obtain DNA swabs from him. They removed the following items from the premises: propane bottles, a propane burner tip, a cigarette lighter, two plastic bottles, a gasoline can, a small wire with a burned fiber, a white powdery substance, some computer equipment and some photo equipment.

Former Oregon State University student Mohamed Osman Mohamud, 19, was charged with attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction in the Nov. 26 Portland incident, which was thwarted by agents who had infiltrated his inner circle. He allegedly used a cell phone in an attempt to trigger a bomb he expected to spread death and destruction across the packed plaza, but has entered a not guilty plea through his court-appointed attorney.

Mohamud, an emigrant from the war-torn Moslem nation of Somalia, had dropped out of OSU after a brief period of enrollment there. He attended services at the mosque while planning the attack.

The FBI arrested him in a sting operation in which undercover agents wired six 55-gallon drums into a massive remote-controlled bomb replica and placed it a van across the street from the square.

The mosque fire was set two days after Mohamud's arrest by someone who broke out an office window and tossed in a container of flammable liquid.

The affidavit used to obtain a warrant for the Crawford search was submitted by James Poole of the Corvallis police. In it, he alleges:

After the fire, FBI agents and Corvallis police detectives began canvassing the neighborhood immediately surrounding the mosque, asking each resident a standard set of questions.

Crawford denied any knowledge of the Nov. 28 fire, but told an interview team that he'd had a flashlight stolen the night of Nov. 27.

He described it as a blue, two-battery mini-Maglite. He said he likes to study on the porch at night so he can smoke, and used it as a reading light.

Poole accompanied the team to the residence for a followup interview in which Crawford provided additional detail.

He said he had been outside studying for a Spanish test until about 11 or 11:30 p.m. that night, and had left the light in his green camping chair. The next morning, it was gone.

He said he thought about reporting the theft to police, but his mother and sister talked him out of it.

Poole showed Crawford a photo of a mini-Maglite found at the scene of the mosque arson and asked him if that was the one in question. "That really looks like my light," he conceded.

The detective went on to ask Crawford why someone might attempt to burn down the mosque. Crawford said, "Because they don't like Muslims."

He speculated that it might have been in retaliation for Mohamud's failed attempt to bomb the tree-lighting. He said a person engaging in a bombing attempt like that should serve a long prison sentence or be sent back where they came from.

Poole said Crawford denied having been drinking, when evidence clearly suggested otherwise, and being on probation, when records show he remains on probation on a third-degree assault conviction from Washington County. He termed that evidence of a pattern of deception.

He asked Crawford to take a polygraph exam, then to permit a search. When he was met with refusal on both counts, he left a surveillance team in place while he left to obtain a search warrant.

In the affidavit, Poole said that based on this investigation, he believes the crimes of first-degree arson, first-degree criminal mischief, second-degree burglary, second-degree intimidation, possession of a destructive device and unlawful manufacture of a destructive device were committed, and that supporting evidence of the crimes would be found either at the Crawford residence or on Crawford's person.

During his teen years in Yamhill County, he compiled a record that led his mother to place him in the Dundee Ranch behavioral treatment program in Costa Rica. However, she had to fly down and retrieve him after authorities shut the academy down on allegations of rampant abuse.

He contended he was beaten and tortured there, as did other troubled teens sent there for treatment. His story was chronicled by then-reporter Matt LaPlante in an extensive News-Register article in 2003.

— The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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