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News Release

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Michigan man pleads guilty to possessing Molotov cocktails

A 23-year-old Michigan man pleaded guilty yesterday in federal court to possessing Molotov cocktails.

Matthew Bradley Depalma pleaded guilty to one count of possession of destructive devices. He entered his plea Oct. 21 in Minneapolis before United States District Court Judge John Tunheim. Depalma was charged on Aug. 30.

According to Depalma's plea agreement, from Aug. 22 through Aug. 29 he knowingly and intentionally possessed five Molotov cocktails that were not registered to him in the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record.

According to a Federal Bureau of Investigation affidavit, Depalma became known to the FBI in July 2008, when Depalma attended the CrimeThinc Convergence near Waldo, Wisc. During this event, Depalma allegedly stated his intention to travel to Minnesota to attend the RNC, and also expressed his desire to "make some bombs" and "blow up" things during the RNC.

The affidavit states that Depalma discussed with a FBI source his desire to make Molotov cocktails, describing in detail the use of ingredients that would make the flammable liquid more viscous so that it would stick to a target and burn longer and hotter than an ordinary gasoline-based Molotov cocktail.

The affidavit states that Depalma went to a Hennepin County Library on Aug. 18 and spent 90 minutes researching recipes for explosive devices. Depalma produced a handwritten list of items he would need to construct "special" Molotov cocktails that would stick to people and other targets.

Depalma's conversations, recorded on Aug. 20, described a plan to place a bomb near the Xcel Center during the RNC in an effort to disrupt the convention. The plan involved entering utility tunnels near the center and using either Molotov cocktails or a chemical bomb to destroy

electrical cables and cause a power outage. Depalma, the affidavit states, also described a related plan to use napalm-filled Molotov cocktails on the streets against police officers stating, "I will light one of those pigs on fire."

The affidavit states that Depalma obtained supplies for making Molotov cocktails on Aug. 21-22.

On Aug. 22, Depalma allegedly manufactured two jugs of a homemade napalm-like substance for use in Molotov cocktails. He created a flammable gelatin, and described to another the proper technique for throwing a Molotov cocktail to obtain the best explosion. Depalma continued to discuss his desire to make a bomb for use at the Xcel Center on either the convention's first day (Sept. 1) or last day (Sept. 4).

According to the affidavit, Depalma stated that if he could bomb the center on Sept. 1 they might call off the convention. He added that a "power outage would say a lot" and that it was his "main purpose." Depalma also said that he would like to bomb the Xcel Energy Center on Sept. 4 so that the convention would "end with a bang."

Depalma was observed traveling to a remote location in Rosemount for the purpose of assembling and testing Molotov cocktails. On Aug. 25, Depalma went to a remote location in Roseville for the purpose of experimenting with chemicals for a chemical bomb.

The affidavit states that Depalma manufactured three additional Molotov cocktails in a Minneapolis apartment on Aug. 28, where he was arrested. The affidavit states that Depalma possessed a total of five Molotov cocktails between Aug. 22-28, which were not registered to him in the National Firearms Registration and Transfer Record, as required by law.

Depalma faces a potential maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment. Judge Tunheim will determine Depalma's sentence at a future date. This case is the result of an investigation by the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force, which includes the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney W. Anders Folk.