

FBI – Washington Field Office

Individual Detained in Incident Near Pentagon

FBI Washington, D.C.
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Public Information Office
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Yonathan Melaku, 22, of Alexandria, VA., was detained this morning for trespass after he was seen in Arlington National Cemetery at a time when the cemetery was closed. Initial contact with Melaku found he was carrying items which caused initial concerns about the public's safety, prompting the FBI and other agencies to respond to the scene and roads around the Pentagon to be shut down.

The FBI's Washington Field Office, United States Park Police, Pentagon Force Protection Agency, Ft. Myer Police, Arlington County Police Department and Arlington County Fire Department were involved in the investigation, which initiated on the grounds adjacent and West of the Pentagon.

Melaku was initially observed in the early morning hours inside the grounds of Arlington National Cemetery. Ft. Myer Police detained him. United States Park Police questioned Melaku and initial investigative efforts quickly identified two potential public safety concerns, items in Melaku's possession as well as a red 2011 Nissan vehicle found parked in a wooded area nearby the Pentagon directly off Route 27 and Route 110.

Arlington County Fire Department and an initial FBI search of the vehicle found no immediate threat. The FBI removed the vehicle from the scene and further processing of the vehicle is underway.

Melaku also was in possession of a backpack that contained unknown materials which initially caused public safety concerns. Bomb experts at the scene, however, were able to determine that the items were non-explosive and inert. The materials in the backpack will undergo further testing at the FBI Laboratory in Quantico, VA.

As part of the investigation, Melaku's residence in Alexandria, VA was searched by the FBI with the assistance of Fairfax County Police Department.

At this time, law enforcement believes Melaku acted alone and that there were no other locations or activity involved.

The United States Marine Corps reports that Melaku joined the Marine Corps Reserve on Sept. 4, 2007 and is currently listed as a Marine Corps reservist Lance Cpl and a motor vehicle operator with Combat Engineer Support Company, 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, 4th Marine Division, Marine Forces Reserve. He has previously been awarded the National Defense Service Medal and the Selected Marine Corps Reserve Medal. He has not deployed overseas.

Melaku currently remains in the custody of the United States Park Police.

The FBI's Washington Field Office Joint Terrorism Task Force (WFO JTTF) provides critical incident response in the National Capital Region for both federal investigations and the request of any law enforcement agency. United States Park Police, Arlington County Police Department, Pentagon Force Protection Agency, Fairfax County Police Department are each represented on the WFO's JTTF