



Ethan Phelan Melzer

- a/k/a Etil Reggad
- Age 24 at time of conviction
- Lived in Louisville, KY
- Joined the U.S. Army in 2018
- Member of the Order of the Nine Angles (O9A), a white supremacist, neo-Nazi and pro-jihadist group.
- O9A has expressed admiration both for Nazis and Islamic jihadists.
- Members and associates of O9A have also participated in acts of violence, including murders.



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CASE STUDY

Attempted murder, providing material support to terrorists, and illegally transmitting national defense information

WHAT HAPPENED

According to court documents, Melzer deployed abroad to Italy as a member of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team in October 2019. While stationed abroad, Melzer subscribed to encrypted online forums where he downloaded and accessed videos of jihadist attacks on U.S. troops and facilities and jihadist executions of civilians and soldiers. He also downloaded far-right, neo-Nazi, and other white supremacist propaganda.

In early May 2020, Melzer was reassigned to a unit scheduled for deployment to guard an isolated and sensitive military installation (the Military Base). As part of this intensive training, Melzer learned details about the purpose, layout, and security of the Military Base. Melzer and his unit also received in-depth training for numerous threat scenarios at the Military Base, including how to respond to various potential terrorist attack scenarios.

Melzer passed that information to members of O9A. Melzer secretly used an encrypted messaging application to propose, advocate for, and plan a deadly attack on his fellow service members. He sent messages to members and associates of O9A, in particular a sub-group known as the "RapeWaffen Division." He provided details about his unit's anticipated deployment, including troop movements, relevant dates, locations, armaments, topography, and security, all in connection with the proposed attack on his unit and the Military Base. Melzer and his co-conspirators used this information to plan what they referred to as a "jihadi attack" with the objective of causing a "mass casualty" event victimizing his fellow service members.

To further the attack plan, Melzer and his co-conspirators passed these messages to a purported member of Al Qaeda. Melzer's proposed attack evolved as he gathered and distributed additional sensitive information about the deployment.

Melzer pleaded guilty to attempting to murder U.S. service members, providing and attempting to provide material support to terrorists, and illegally transmitting national defense information on June 24, 2022. He was sentenced to 45 years in prison.

INDICATORS

Access Attributes – As an active-duty soldier, Melzer had access to sensitive information about his unit's location, strength, and armaments. He disclosed that information to members of the extremist organization the Order of the Nine Angles (O9A), a white supremacist, neo-Nazi, and pro-jihadist group.

Allegiance to the United States - Melzer consumed propaganda disseminated by O9A and the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, or ISIS, which has been designated by the Department of State as a Foreign Terrorist Organization since October 2004.

Outside Activities - According to court documents, Melzer is a member of O9A. O9A espouses neo-Nazi, antisemitic, and satanic beliefs and promotes extreme violence to accelerate and cause the demise of western civilization.

IMPACT

- “Today’s sentence holds Mr. Melzer accountable for an egregious and shameful act of betrayal against his own military unit and his country,” said Assistant Attorney General Matthew G. Olsen. “The Justice Department will use all available resources to disrupt and bring to justice those who would aid foreign terrorist organizations and use violence to harm our men and women in uniform or any American anywhere.”
- “Ethan Melzer infiltrated the U.S. Army in service of a neo-Nazi, white supremacist and jihadist group,” said U.S. Attorney Damian Williams. “He used his membership in the military to pursue an appalling goal: the brutal murder of his fellow U.S. service members in a carefully plotted ambush. By unlawfully disclosing his unit’s location, strength, and armaments to other O9A members and jihadists in furtherance of this ambush, Melzer traitorously sought to attack the very soldiers he was entrusted to protect. Today’s sentence makes clear that Melzer’s brazen actions backfired and that this office — along with our partners in law enforcement and the military — will work tirelessly to bring traitors like Melzer to justice and to protect the safety and integrity of our armed services.”

ADDITIONAL INFO

- Melzer told members of O9A in his encrypted electronic communications “[y]ou just gotta understand that currently I am risking my literal free life to give you all this” and that he was “expecting results.” Melzer further acknowledged that he could be killed during the attack and described his willingness to die for O9A’s goals, writing “who gives a fuck [. . .] it would be another war . . . I would’ve died successfully . . . cause another 10 year war in the Middle East would definitely leave a mark.” Melzer also acknowledged in his messages that he deleted some of the communications regarding the planning of the attack because the plot amounted to treason.
- Melzer also promised to leak more information once he arrived at the Military Base — including real-time photographs of the facility and the frequency and channel of U.S. Army radio communications — in order to maximize the likelihood of a successful attack on his unit or on a replacement unit deployed to the Military Base.
- After describing the unit’s weaponry during the deployment — and providing information consistent with the briefings he had received — Melzer described to his co-conspirators how an attack would “essentially cripple” the unit’s “fire-teams.” To further the attack plan, Melzer and his co-conspirators passed these messages to a purported member of Al Qaeda. Melzer’s proposed attack evolved as he gathered and distributed additional sensitive information about the deployment.

Questions to consider:

- What types of anti-Government expressions rise to the level that requires reporting?
- What role does operations security (OPSEC) play in combatting violent extremism?

Resources for further exploration:

- [Insider Threat and Extremist Activity Within the DOD](https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobajds/insider/Insider-Threat-and-Extremist-Activity-DOD.pdf)
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Portals/124/Documents/jobajds/insider/Insider-Threat-and-Extremist-Activity-DOD.pdf>)
- [Honor in Hindsight - Episode 3: Divided Allegiance](https://www.cdse.edu/Training/Security-Training-Videos/Insider-Threat-Training-Videos/Divided-Allegiance/)
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Training/Security-Training-Videos/Insider-Threat-Training-Videos/Divided-Allegiance/>)
- [Honor in Hindsight - Episode 4: Mission First](https://www.cdse.edu/Training/Security-Training-Videos/Insider-Threat-Training-Videos/Mission-First/)
(<https://www.cdse.edu/Training/Security-Training-Videos/Insider-Threat-Training-Videos/Mission-First/>)

Supporting Through Reporting!

Contact the appropriate POC to report any observed potential risk indicators:

Name: _____ Agency/Department: _____
Title: Supervisor/Security Officer/ITP Senior Official/ITP Manager