

Mosque arsonist Randolph Linn sentenced to 20 years

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TOLEDO, Ohio (RNS) An Indiana truck driver and former Marine was sentenced to 20 years in prison and ordered to pay \$1.4 million for setting fire to a Toledo-area mosque, a crime that the judge likened to Monday's Boston Marathon bombings as "assaults on the American spirit."

Judge Jack Zouhary of U.S. District Court in Toledo on Tuesday (April 16) imposed the sentence on Randy Linn, 52, of St. Joe, Ind., who had signed a binding agreement admitting guilt and agreeing to the 20-year sentence in December. The judge earlier rejected an attempt by Linn to withdraw the plea.

At his sentencing, Linn said he wasn't himself when he poured gasoline on the prayer room carpet at the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo and set it on fire.

"That day, Sept. 30th, that wasn't me," Linn said, "I mean, it was me that did it, but it's not me usually. I was drinking a lot."

Linn said at a December hearing that he had downed 45 Pabst Blue Ribbon beers before driving two hours from his Indiana home to the mosque, which he had seen during his long-distance hauls. The fire, smoke and resulting water damage from the sprinkler system caused more than \$1.4 million in damage and closed the building for six months.

Linn said he had acted spontaneously after seeing a wounded U.S. soldier on television, and blamed Muslims for the soldier's injuries.

Linn pried open a locked door and walked through the building with a gun. There was nobody in the mosque at the time and he went back to his car and returned

with the gas can.

Linn was sentenced on federal charges of intentionally defacing, damaging, and destroying religious property; using a fire to commit a felony; and using and carrying a firearm to commit a crime of violence.

Cherreffe Kadri, a Toledo lawyer and president of the Islamic Center, said in a victim's impact she read to Linn: "We've lost a lot, but you've lost much more. And I honestly feel sorry for you."

The judge sentenced Linn to 20 years in prison and five years of supervised release, and ordered him to pay \$1,446,810.91.

In a short statement, Linn said he had ignored his wife -- now his ex-wife -- who warned him not to drink so much.

"I didn't listen to her. I lost her. I lost my son. ... I messed up her life. I messed up my own life," he said. "Thank God I didn't hurt anybody at the mosque. I don't think I would've -- hopefully I wouldn't have, I don't know. And I'm sorry for everything. I hope someday I'll be forgiven."

Karen Sechler, Linn's ex-wife, wiped away tears after the sentencing. She said she filed for divorce two days after his arrest.

"I have felt nothing but love for Muslim people," she said. "It tore my heart out, what he did to them. He got what he deserved."