

Clark Man Charged After Weapons Cache In Home

CLARK — A local man is in custody after police responding to his Clark home uncovered a cache of weapons and dangerous materials that could be used to make explosive devices, acting Union County Prosecutor Lyndsay V. Ruotolo and Clark Police Chief Pedro Matos jointly announced Tuesday.

Robert J. Willis, 52, has been charged with third-degree creating a false public alarm.

At approximately 10 a.m. on Monday, August 5, an emergency dispatcher received a call from a man later identified as Willis, warning that a police presence was going to be needed at his State Street home later in the day because a person intended to commit acts of violence there, according to the preliminary investigation.

Clark Police Department patrol units responding to the home found that Willis was not present, and upon a search, a total of 12 long guns, three handguns, quantities of ammunition, fireworks, and materials and chemicals that could be used in the creation of explosive devices were seized.

The investigation quickly revealed that the defendant was at a location in central New York, and members of the New York State Police and Steuben County Sheriff's Office located and arrested him at a relative's home without incident. He remains in custody pending extradition to New Jersey and a first appearance and detention hearing to take place in state Superior Court.

The prosecutor's office and Clark Police Department were assisted in the investigation by various members of the Newark offices of the FBI and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, as well as the Joint Terrorism Task Force, New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Union County Bomb Squad, Union County Office of Emergency Management, Union County Sheriff's Office Crime Scene Unit, and Clark Fire Department.

The investigation is continuing, and additional charges are being contemplated, according to the prosecutor's office.

Kennedy, Carter Organize Letter Campaign to Troops

TRENTON — Local students recently participated in an effort to support American soldiers stationed around the world through a letter writing campaign organized by Assemblyman James Kennedy (D-22nd, Rahway) and Assemblywoman Linda Carter (D-22nd, Plainfield). Children in schools throughout Middlesex, Somerset and Union counties were educated on the importance of America's service members and encouraged to write general letters to troops abroad.

Assemblyman Kennedy's and Assemblywoman Carter's offices coordinated the "any service member mail" efforts so soldiers without someone back home could receive letters to brighten their day. The letters collected will be given to the non-profit organization American Recreational Military Services (ARMS) to be distributed overseas.

"Working tirelessly for freedom

and equality for people all over the world, the service men and women of our country deserve the utmost respect and admiration," Assemblyman Kennedy said. "With these letters we hope to give at least a fraction of the appreciation they deserve and to remind them their work does not go unnoticed."

"Inviting students in our district to write letters for military troops, who risk their lives every day for our safety, has been a great way to introduce the subject of civic responsibility in classrooms," Assemblywoman Carter said.

"Without the bravery of every man and woman who continue to serve our country, we as Americans could not enjoy the freedoms we have today," said Ronnie Micciulla, founder and executive director of ARMS. "The countless heartfelt letters we've received from students across New Jersey are going to be a great surprise for our troops deployed abroad."



LEARNING ABOUT TREES...Union County Agent Madeline Flahive DiNardo trains volunteers on how to measure the diameter of a tree.

Volunteers Inspecting Trees for Signs of EAB

COUNTY — A team of 25 carefully trained volunteers from Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) of Union County have been inspecting hundreds of ash trees in several Union County Parks for signs of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a non-native insect pest that infests and kills all species of Ash trees. As of yet, EAB has not been detected in county although it is anticipated to be discovered soon.

"A huge thank you goes out to all of the volunteers who are helping to inventory and map Ash trees across Union County," Freeholder Chair Bette Jane Kowalski said. "Creating an Ash tree inventory is the first step in developing an EAB response plan to ensure the county is ready for this new insect if it emerges."

Infestations throughout the U.S. and Canada have killed tens of millions of ash trees since 2002. Currently it is known to be in 14 of 21 New Jersey counties.

Volunteers meet weekly at different parks throughout the county. The Ash tree inventory has been completed for nine parks including Warinanco, Lenape, Echo Lake, Cedar Brook, Rahway River, Nomahegan, Meisel Avenue, Green Brook, and Oak Ridge Parks. Close to 800 Ash trees have been inventoried in these parks.

The information collected is being used to make recommendations on the value of treating and saving Ash trees, versus removing them. This process will help take action to develop long-range budgets for Ash tree management.

Ash trees can be identified by their

compound leaves meaning the leaf is divided into smaller leaflets. Another distinguishing characteristic includes the arrangement of branches and buds, which are in pairs across from each other, known as opposite branching.

The first sign that an Ash tree has been infested by the EAB is usually damage to the bark. Woodpeckers flake off the bark with their beaks to get at the EAB larvae. The distinctive white stripes left from this flaking are called "blonding." The adult female EAB creates characteristic D-shaped exit holes, three to four millimeters in size, when they emerge in May or early June. As the infestation worsens the crown will begin to die back starting at the top.

EAB infestations are fatal to trees not treated properly with insecticides. Ash trees killed by EAB become brittle very quickly, making them a greater safety hazard to pedestrians and arborists removing trees.

Homeowners looking for assistance protecting their Ash trees should contact a certified licensed tree expert. More information for homeowners and communities on EAB in New Jersey can be found at emeraldashborer.nj.gov. For more information on this project contact RCE of Union County at (908) 654-9854.

The Rutgers Master Gardener program in Union County is supported by the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders and Rutgers, the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station with offices at the Union County Complex in Westfield, at 300 North Avenue East.

Malinowski Statement on Shootings In El Paso, Tex.

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The following statement was issued Saturday by Congressman Tom Malinowski (D-7th, Somerset) following this weekend's mass shooting in Texas:

"After [Saturday's] shootings in El Paso, Tex., it is beyond question that terrorists motivated by a common white supremacist ideology are committing deadly attacks against Jewish, Muslim, African-American, Hispanic and other non-white communities in the United States and around the world, and pose a clear and present danger to our national security. There is legislation pending in the House and Senate that would strengthen our government's ability to defeat domestic terrorism, while making it harder for terrorists to acquire guns. Congress should be called back into session as soon as possible to act on this urgent threat. We should not wait until the Summer district work period ends on September 9 to take action that will protect the American people."

"Pending legislation includes the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, of which I am an original cosponsor, and which would beef up the Justice and Homeland Security Department units responsible for addressing this threat, while improving collection of data. Congress should quickly appropriate supplemental funds to both Departments, including for programs to

counter violent extremism in the United States that the administration had previously cut. We should consider passing a domestic counterterrorism statute, and new measures to combat the spread of hateful ideologies online."

"We must also, on a bipartisan basis, condemn any political leader or public figure who echoes the beliefs of these terrorists, including that immigrants are 'invading' the United States or set on 'replacing' any of our citizens. This ideology is utterly contrary to America's founding creed that all men and women are created equal, and to our experience as a nation built by, and benefiting from, the contributions of immigrants from every part of the world."

"Finally, it is long past time for Congress to approve sensible legislation to keep guns from falling into the wrong hands, including the bipartisan universal background check bill that Mitch McConnell is holding up in the Senate, a ban on military assault weapons that allow terrorists to commit mass murder before police can intervene, and allowing gun violence restraining orders."

"We should take the threat posed by white supremacist terrorists as seriously and as urgently as we rightly take the threat posed by terrorists groups based outside the United States. There is not a moment to be lost."

Union County to Hold Fourth Business Expo

COUNTY — The Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders invites business owners, managers and entrepreneurs to attend the 2019 Union County Means Business Expo at the Warinanco Sports Center in Warinanco Park on Wednesday, September 18 from 5 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Warinanco Park is part of the Union County parks system and is located in the Borough of Roselle, bordering Elizabeth and Linden.

"Last year the Business Expo hosted 80 vendors and 300 attendees, providing a valuable opportunity for networking and meeting peers in the business community," Freeholder Chair Bette Jane Kowalski said. "We are looking forward to another successful event this year."

Now in its fourth year, the Business Expo provides a showcase for local businesses as well as an opportunity to network and grow contacts within the Union County community and beyond.

Since its inception in 2016, the Expo has grown to include a wide variety of businesses and entrepreneurs including service providers, retailers, banks, insurance, real estate, technology, consulting, marketing, legal, accounting, health, education, nonprofits and government agencies. The event is also popular with chambers of commerce and representatives from municipal and county government offices.

This year the Expo once again will feature raffle prizes at every table along with a grand prize of a Visa gift card. The passport/autograph contest will also return with additional prizes for attendees who collect signatures from every vendor. Rounding out the event will be food tastings featuring the menus from Ashbrook Golf

Course, Galloping Hill Golf Course and the Warinanco Sports Center.

As a service this year, the Business Expo is offering free onsite child care. The service is available for children ages 4 to 12 and will be provided by the professional staff of the Warinanco Sports Center Summer Camp. It must be requested in advance (walk-ins strictly prohibited) by filling out the online form at ucnj.org/ucmb when registering as an attendee or vendor.

Admission for individual attendees is free. Pre-registration for all attendees is suggested but not required, except for those requesting child care. To register as an attendee, fill out the online Attendee Registration form at ucnj.org/ucmb.

The vendor table fee of \$100 includes a half-page ad in the program along with 10 VIP tickets for preferred clients. To register a vendor table, fill out the online Vendor Registration form at ucnj.org/ucmb.

Union County Means Business is an economic development initiative of the Freeholder Board with the support of community partners including the New Jersey Small Business Development Center, Union County Economic Development Corporation, Greater Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce, Suburban Chamber of Commerce, Kean University, Union County College, Union Township Chamber of Commerce, Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce, Cranford Area Chamber of Commerce, and the New Jersey LGBT Chamber of Commerce.

For more information about Union County Means Business, visit ucnj.org/ucmb or contact Deana Mesaros at (908) 659-7412 or dmesaros@ucnj.org.

Roselle Man Charged In Four Arson Incidents

COUNTY — A Roselle man has been arrested and charged in connection with a series of arsons committed on a single night last week in Linden, acting Union County Prosecutor Lyndsay V. Ruotolo and Linden Police Chief David Hart jointly announced last Thursday.

Marcus D. Wise, 30, of Roselle is charged with two counts of second-degree aggravated arson, two counts of third-degree arson, and single counts of second-degree attempted aggravated arson, third-degree burglary, and fourth-degree criminal mischief.

At approximately 10 p.m. on Thursday, July 25, members of the Linden Police Department and Linden Fire Department responded to the 800 block of North Wood Avenue on a report of a structure fire at a business, according to Union County Assistant Prosecutor and Special Prosecutions

Unit Supervisor Melissa Spagnoli, who is prosecuting the case.

Approximately 30 minutes later, members of the same departments responded to a report of a fire in a vacant home on the 900 block of Seymour Avenue in Linden, Ms. Spagnoli said. Shortly after midnight that same night, two additional fires were reported, one a brush fire located on East Curtis Street, the other a dumpster fire on East Henry Street, on the grounds of Soehl Middle School.

Shortly after 1:15 a.m., Linden Police Department officers responded to the 400 block of Roselle Street on a report of a person throwing rocks through a glass door of a building and found Wise at the scene. When taken into custody, he was found to be in possession of a lighter, a piece of cardboard, and a can of WD-40.

Fourteen Charged for Failure To Register With Megan's Law

COUNTY — A nearly week-long operation involving local, county, state, and federal authorities, working together, has resulted in the arrests of 14 fugitives who failed to comply with their reporting requirements as registered sex offenders under Megan's Law.

Participating in Operation Roll Call were members of the Elizabeth Police Department, Union County Prosecutor's Office, Union County Sheriff's Office, New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice, New Jersey State Parole Board, New Jersey State Police, and U.S. Marshals Service.

The Operation began with approximately two months of preparatory investigative work and was initiated last month, with the 14 apprehended defendants appearing in state Superior Court at various times throughout the week and detention hearings scheduled to continue into this week. Assistant prosecutors handling the cases have moved to have the defendants detained, pending the adjudication of the new charges.

The defendants range in age from 24 to 56, and were located and apprehended as far away as North Carolina. All were charged with failure to register a new address, re-register

with law enforcement, or notify law enforcement of an address change, all third-degree crimes commonly punishable by three to five years in prison.

The defendants included: Fernando Casamar, 56; Romel Clark, 25; Orlando DeJesus, 43; Felix T. Garcia, 46; Christopher Irlanda, 28; Rasheed Johnson, 40; Antwaun M. Marshall, 35; Vernon L. Miller, 24; Jeffrey L. Nash, 36; Rondell L. Palmer, 40; Alexander Rosa, 24; Robert Skipworth, 43; and Charles Williams, 52, all of Elizabeth; and Lamont J. Wallace, 46, of Matawan.

Collectively, the apprehended individuals have been arrested 127 times and convicted on 56 indictable crimes, including sexual assault, kidnapping, criminal sexual contact, endangering the welfare of a child, promoting prostitution, assaulting a police officer, and a variety of drug and weapons offenses.

Investigators also continue to pursue multiple additional fugitives who have been charged in absentia with failure to report.

New Jersey's Megan's Law went into effect on October 31, 1994, requiring that convicted sex offenders who were found to be repetitive and compulsive by experts and the courts, regardless of their date of conviction, register with law enforcement regularly.



Susan D. Dougherty for The Westfield Leader and The Times
VIGIL AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE...Following the two mass shootings this past weekend and in Texas and on Monday in Ohio, a somber crowd gathers for a vigil in Mindowaskin Park, Westfield, on Monday night. At the vigil, townspeople honored the victims of the recent gun violence, and showed their support to the families of those who lost their lives. Audience members were handed cards with the names of the deceased.

Shootings In Texas, Dayton Reminds Me of Gunman at Tamaques School

When I heard of the recent shootings in El Paso and Dayton I immediately thought of the massacre that was averted at our own Tamaques School. For the few who may not be aware of the incident on June 13, A Delaware man entered Tamaques School looking for a teacher. It's still unclear whether he was armed at the time. He went back to his car in the Tamaques parking lot and was arrested a short time later with a .45-caliber handgun loaded with hollow-point bullets, two additional loaded clips and more than 130 additional rounds of ammunition in the trunk of his car.

If it weren't for a tip from Delaware police and the quick and decisive action of the Westfield Police De-

partment, that day could have looked very different. It's been 20 years since Columbine and we've had a near-miss here in Westfield. A potentially armed man gained entrance to the building and there was no plan for the kids who were practicing town lacrosse on school grounds.

I'm running for the Westfield Board of Education because I believe it's time to make the appropriate upgrades to our schools to keep our kids safe — the technology is there. It's time for a steady police presence at schools and to develop and articulate safety plans for those who share our school grounds.

Patrick Justin Fahey
Westfield Board of Education
Candidate

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