

## **U.S. Attorney Justin Herdman's comments on recent Ohio cases involving political violence**

*Remarks as prepared announcing federal criminal charges against James Reardon:*

Good morning. Thank you for coming today and thank you to all of the local police chiefs who are here. Special thanks to Chief D'Egidio who drove here from New Middletown.

We are here to announce the unsealing of a federal complaint against James Reardon, age 20, of New Middletown, Ohio. He is charged with one count of making threats using a facility of interstate commerce.

Federal rules give us a few weeks before seeking an indictment in the Grand Jury and we will continue to use that time to further our investigation of Mr. Reardon's conduct and to determine if others were involved. In just a moment, Special Agent Eric Smith of the FBI will detail the facts uncovered in our investigation thus far.

I want to start by thanking the community. This case is the result of a concerned citizen who took the time to point out Mr. Reardon's social media activity to a New Middletown Police Officer. This case is just one of several over the past few weeks that are the product of our friends and neighbors seeing something, and then saying something.

For example, a few weeks ago, Timothy Ireland was indicted on firearms and threat charges after a private citizen alerted law enforcement. And at the beginning of this month, Vincent Armstrong pleaded guilty to charges related to a planning an attack on a bar in Toledo. That case started with a tip from a concerned citizen to Toledo police. There are several more examples and they illustrate the fact that these type of cases rely on very two important people – a concerned citizen and a responsive law enforcement officer. Fortunately, we have both of those in abundance in northern Ohio.

I want to thank the men and women who make up our police departments, and some of their leadership are here today. As I said, tips only matter if police officers take them seriously and investigate them thoroughly. The presence of our local law enforcement highlights the message that police officers are trained to be responsive to information from the public, and the officers assigned to these departments – and many others – will do just that when confronted with credible and specific threats. I also want to thank the FBI and ATF agents who joined with the police in each of these cases and bring outstanding expertise to these investigations.

Now let me speak generally to those who are advocates for white supremacy, or white nationalism. I am talking directly to you. The Constitution protects your right to speak, your right to think, and your right to believe. If you want to waste the blessings of liberty by going down a path of hatred and failed ideologies, that is your choice.

Democracy allows you to test those ideas in the public forum. If you want to submit your beliefs to the American people and get their reaction, please be my guest. Keep this in mind, though. Thousands and thousands of young Americans already voted with their lives to ensure that this same message of intolerance, death, and destruction would not prevail - you can count their ballots by visiting any American cemetery in North Africa, Italy, France, or Belgium and tallying the white headstones. You can also recite the many names of civil rights advocates who bled and died in opposing supporters of those same ideologies of hatred. Their voices may be distant, but they can still be heard.

Go ahead and make your case for Nazism, a white nation, and racial superiority. The Constitution may give you a voice, but it doesn't guarantee you a receptive audience.

Your right to free speech does not automatically mean that people will agree with you. In fact, you have an absolute God-given and inalienable right to be on the losing end of this argument.

What you don't have, though, is the right to take out your frustration at failure in the political arena by resorting to violence. You don't have any right to threaten the lives and well-being of our neighbors. They have an absolute God-given and inalienable right to live peacefully, to worship as they please, to be free from fear that they might become a target simply because of the color of their skin, the country of their birth, or the form of their prayer.

Threatening to kill Jewish people, gunning down innocent Latinos on a weekend shopping trip, planning and plotting to perpetrate murders in the name of a nonsense racial theory, sitting to pray with God-fearing people who you execute moments later - those actions don't make you soldiers, they make you criminals. Law enforcement doesn't go to war with cowards who break the law, we arrest them and send them to prison.

As I said, this case was made by a concerned member of the public and a responsive police officer. That's all it takes to stop you. The men and women of our community are allied with law enforcement. And every single member of law enforcement took an oath to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic. Many of us have taken that oath several times - as police officers, federal agents, prosecutors, military members, and elected officials.

Together, we represent the absolute best of what America has to offer. Our skin is every color you can imagine, our families come from a hundred different countries and a hundred different faiths. What makes us different doesn't split us apart, though. Those differences are insignificant compared to what is the same about us - we are united in our commitment to each other, to our families, and to our communities. We are the living embodiment of everything you say is impossible.

Together, we are united to ensure that you commit no further acts of violence in the name of your beliefs. When you wake up tomorrow morning, no matter what time, I want you to remember something. You can't set your alarm clock early enough to beat us out of bed. The men and women of law enforcement don't wake up. We never went to sleep. We are always awake. And arm in arm with the public, when your hatred leads you to break the law, we will do everything we can to be there to stop you.