

FLEECE JACKET: THE ASSASSINATION PLOT AGAINST TRUMP

Amid all the other excitement yesterday, EDNY revealed the arrest, on July 12, of an assassination plot believed to target Donald Trump. A Pakistani man with ties to Iran, Asif Merchant, pitched someone in the US – referred to only as Confidential Source – in April on what purported to be a clothing import business, with an opportunity to earn \$100,000. The complaint suggests that Merchant had reason to believe CS had committed crimes in the past. But when meeting in person on June 3 about the business, Merchant described that the business involved killing.

On or about June 3, 2024, MERCHANT flew from Texas to LaGuardia Airport in New York. The CS picked up MERCHANT from the airport and drove him to a hotel in Nassau County, New York. While at the hotel, MERCHANT told the CS that the opportunity he had for the CS was not a one-time opportunity and would be ongoing. MERCHANT then made a “finger gun” motion with his hand, indicating that the opportunity was related to a killing. MERCHANT subsequently took the CS’s cellphone and put it in a drawer for security reasons, so they could discuss the plan. MERCHANT stated that he would give the CS more details about the plan the next day but that he needed the CS to arrange a meeting for MERCHANT to meet hitmen in New York.

The complaint is coy about when the CS got the Feds involved. But by the next day, the FBI had set up cameras that captured Merchant drawing up his plan on a napkin. And when CS introduced Merchant to people he believed to be hitmen on June 10, they were really undercover Feds.

On June 13, Merchant wrote up a code for CS, describing each of three types of crimes – stealing documents, starting a protest as cover, and assassinating someone – as different kinds of tops, with fleece jacket signifying the assassination.

Merchant must have made last minute plans to leave the country on July 12, because he was arrested even before the FBI wrote up the complaint on July 14 (the Texas docket describing the Houston arrest must still be sealed). Merchant seemed to be recruiting multiple people in the US, so I assume this all remained sealed for a month to provide the FBI opportunity to track down others.

According to the detention memo, Merchant refused to let the FBI in for 20 minutes, so he may have deleted evidence (though not the paper on which he wrote his fleece jacket code).

Notably, when the FBI arrived at his residence to execute the arrest as well as a search warrant for the residence, Merchant refused to exit his residence for approximately 20 minutes after the FBI announced their presence and the search warrant.

Which makes for some pretty eerie timing, given Thomas Crooks' shooting of Trump on July 13.