

# **Man Pleads Guilty to Mailing Threats to Blow Up the Courthouse Downtown St. Louis**

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November 3 2023 12:58 PM



EAST ST. LOUIS – An inmate already serving a federal sentence entered a guilty plea to new charges Thursday, admitting he threatened to murder a federal judge and former federal probation officer and blow up a U.S. District courthouse. Richard L. Russell, 57, pled guilty to two counts of retaliating against a federal official, two counts of mailing threatening communications and one count of threatening to destroy a building by fire or explosion, namely the Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse in St. Louis.

U.S. Attorney Rachelle Aud Crowe spoke out strongly against Russell's charges: “Threats against the lives of federal judges and probation officers will be met with equally severe punishment.

“The defendant intended to disrupt operations and endanger workers at the Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse, and I commend the U.S. Marshals Service for their work investigating and thwarting the threats.”

According to court documents, Russell was serving a 112-month sentence in the Bureau of Prisons after being charged by the Eastern District of Missouri in January 2014 for mailing threatening communications and threatening to murder a U.S. magistrate judge. On June 1, 2022, officials at the Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse received two similarly handwritten letters containing death threats addressed to a sitting federal judge and retired probation officer that were each signed by Russell.

A deputy U.S. marshal recovered the letters and envelopes. Russell sent the letters to retaliate against the individuals who has previously worked on his court cases. He threatened the judge who sentenced him to 112 months’ imprisonment and the former probation officer who supervised him.

Russell mailed the letters from the Grady County Criminal Justice Authority, a BOP transfer facility located in Chickasaw, Oklahoma. Russell’s charges are each punishable by up to 10 years imprisonment and fines up to \$250,000 per count. Federal judges, probation officers and prosecutors with the Eastern District of Missouri are recused from this case.

The U.S. Marshals Service led the investigation, and Steve Weinhoeft of the Southern District of Illinois is serving as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney and prosecuting the case.