

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

Three plead guilty in plot to hit power grid

Three men have pleaded guilty to terrorism-related charges for plotting to attack the U.S. power grid, hoping that the ensuing electricity outages would stir civil and economic unrest that could lead to a race war, the Justice Department said.

Christopher Brenner Cook, 20, of Columbus, Ohio; Jonathan Allen Frost, 24, of Katy, Tex., and West Lafayette, Ind.; and Jackson Matthew Sawall, 22, of Oshkosh, Wis., sought to assault power grids with “powerful rifles,” federal officials said. The three have pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to provide material support to terrorists and face up to 15 years in prison.

“The defendants believed their plan would cost the government millions of dollars and cause unrest for Americans in the region,” the Justice Department said in a news release Wednesday. “They had conversations about how the possibility of the power being out for many months could cause war, even a race war, and induce the next Great Depression.”

In the fall of 2019, Frost and

Cook met in an online chat group, and Frost raised the idea of attacking a power grid, according to the Justice Department. Within weeks, the two started recruiting others. Cook circulated a list of readings that promoted neo-Nazism and white-supremacist ideology as part of the recruitment process, the agency said, and Sawall, already a friend of Cook, quickly joined.

A few months later, in February 2020, the trio gathered in Columbus, Ohio. There, Frost supplied Cook with a rifle, which the two took to a shooting range for training, the Justice Department said in the news release. It said Frost also gave out “suicide necklaces” filled with fentanyl. The three agreed to take the drug should they be caught by law enforcement, the release said.

In August 2020, FBI agents searched the residences of the three men and found “racially motivated violent extremism Nazi material” and weapons, according to court documents.

— *Andrew Jeong*

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT

Court-martial for sailor over arson accusations

A sailor accused of starting the